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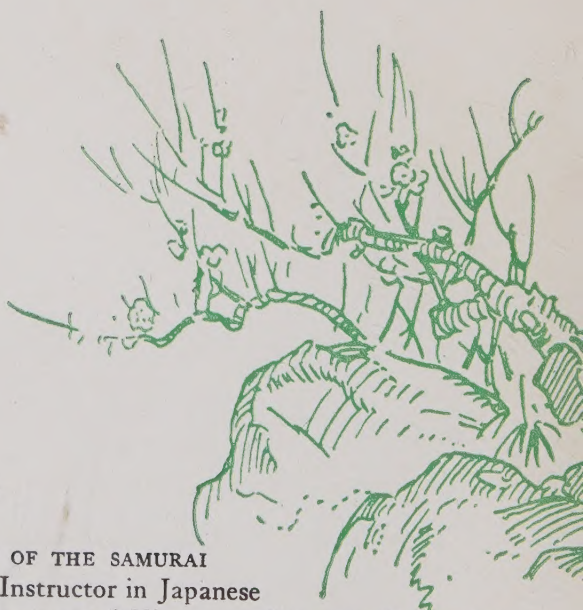
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A DAUGHTER OF THE NARIKIN



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A DAUGHTER OF THE NARIKIN

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WITHDRAWN

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*With
grateful thanks to my friend*

MISS FLORENCE WELLS

*without whose patient co-work and sympathetic
understanding of Japan's young womanhood
of today, this book might have remained only
the tangle of silk floss which her skill has
helped me weave into the brocade
of Yukiko's life story.*

TO
MY LITTLE, BALL-BOUNCING FRIEND
YUKIKO
A DAUGHTER OF THE NARIKIN

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A DAUGHTER OF THE NARIKIN

CHAPTER I

THE NARIKIN

YUKIKO and her father had just finished breakfast. The maid removed the two low tables with their lacquer soup bowls and the blue-and-white china rice bowls, the oblong blue dish of broiled fish, the deep round pickle dish, and the chopsticks, and brought in a tray on which were a tiny teapot and cups and a small flat dish of salted plums. Into each plum was thrust a long splinter of bamboo, so that it would be easy to hold while eating.

"I always think of your mother when I eat salted plums," said Mr. Toyama. "She never failed to have one every morning."

"I like them, too," said Yukiko. "But why do we have to eat them every morning? Everybody does. Is there any special reason?"

Her father laughed.

"Ah, Daughter! Almost a grown-up young lady, and not know that a salted plum eaten each day will keep one from a lingering death! That's a comfortable thing to be sure of in these days of reckless chauffeurs and high-power automobiles."

"Oh, I know the old superstition, of course. But I mean

—really? You always say there is sense behind old sayings. What started this one?”

“Honestly, I do not know, Daughter,” Mr. Toyama answered seriously. “I never thought of it. But it’s true that there is something about salted plums that is good for the health. You don’t remember your mother, but she was well almost to the last.”

“I remember her a little, but everything seems like a dream.”

“You are like her—quiet and gentle; too much so, I am afraid.”

For some time past Mr. Toyama had thought that his daughter was not gay enough for a young girl; but lately he had noticed that her young stepmother had begun taking her to teas, charitable bazaars, and sometimes to a theatre party.

“That will be good for the girl,” he thought with pleased satisfaction. “It will liven her up and give her something to talk about.”

He was thinking of this now, as he looked at his daughter. She was a dainty girl of about seventeen, with the fair olive skin of the Northern provinces, and eyes, deep and soft, that would be beautiful, only that they almost threatened to be round.

Her clothes were rich, but were chosen with quiet taste, and the lower part of the kimono was covered with the pleated skirt of dark-red cashmere worn by all her school-mates.

"Yukiko," said her father, "your mother tells me that her cousin from Kyoto is here with her daughter. There is to be a gathering of relatives in their honour tomorrow. Your mother will take you, of course, and I hope you will have a fine time."

"Father, I—I would rather not go," Yukiko said in a low voice.

Mr. Toyama looked at her in surprise.

"Yukiko, why? Your mother will be disappointed. You wouldn't want to hurt her feelings. Just think of all she is doing for you."

"Yes, I know—but——"

She hesitated. She loved her father with all her heart and dreaded to say a word that would annoy or distress him.

"Daughter, why?" he persisted. "Only ladies will be there, and probably some of them will be young girls. It will be good for you to go."

She looked up a little timidly.

"It's this, Father. I don't feel as if I—belong among those people."

Mr. Toyama looked at her flushed, embarrassed face without saying a word. He too had sometimes had the same feeling when in a group of his high-born acquaintances—men who valued his opinions in business, but who only good-naturedly recognized him when they met socially.

"Once they teased Mother about being a narikin's

wife," went on Yukiko, "and she laughed and didn't care. But then, her father is a viscount, you know, so she belongs with that kind of people."

"Yukiko, you must overcome that feeling," said her father, a little sternly. "I wish you to go tomorrow."

"Very well, Father. I—I will," she said at once, bowing her head dutifully.

The next moment she clapped her hands for the maid to take away the tea things; then she rose from her cushion and began gathering up her school books.

"I must go now," she said, tying them neatly in a square of purple crêpe with her crest on one corner, and bowing a farewell to her father.

She had scarcely left the room when she returned.

"Excuse me," she said, "I forgot my furoshiki"; and hastily picking up the square of crêpe holding her books, again she bowed and hurried out.

Mr. Toyama gave an impatient shrug of his broad shoulders.

"These young people!" he muttered. "Always in a rush! Even Yukiko is growing to be disrespectful to her elders."

He pushed his cushion over to a table near by and picked up the morning paper.

"Unbelievable though it seems," he growled, "it is much easier to carry out my own wishes, even against strong opposition from my business associates, than it is to deal with the women folk under my own roof."

He opened the paper and impatiently shook out its folds.

The table of which he was making an arm rest was of the choicest lacquer—the kind that requires several years for the making. Mr. Toyama, humbly born and practical man though he was, had received from some forgotten ancestor an artistic love of beautiful things; so gradually, during these last years, he had gathered about him a few articles of genuine worth. Beside him was a fine old bronze brazier—older than himself ten times over; and beyond, near the entrance to another room, stood a rare one-panel screen, on which was a striking painting done in India ink—the work of an ancient master, and worth as much as Mr. Toyama had earned in his first thirty years. He liked to think of the panel in that way. He would have scorned being considered sentimental, yet it made him feel as if he had put that much of his own life into this treasure, and so, in some way, had himself become part of a rarely beautiful thing.

These things, in the Japanese room with its satiny straw-woven mats, black-bordered and fitted on the floor as closely as the blocks in a box of dominoes, and with its dainty doors of thin white paper crossed by slender bars of natural wood still fragrant from the forest, made a singular setting for the short, broad-shouldered, keen-eyed business man—Toyama, the narikin.

“Narikin!” How he hated the word! He entirely separated himself in thought from the many narikin of

vulgar taste, some of whom, though having had advantages far superior to his own simple education, spent a large part of their swiftly accumulated millions in geisha parties and in decking out a favourite dancer with a thousand-yen sash or, in an attempt to be modern, putting diamond rings upon her fingers and costly furs around her neck.

Not so Mr. Toyama. No sooner had he gained the leisure and wealth to indulge a hobby than he had taken up the study of Japanese painting and poetry. Although far from being a genius, he did, in time, accomplish some work that he could, with just pride, show to his amateur artist friends. And his poetry was not bad. At one of the Annual Poetry Contests, which, by the gracious privilege bestowed by His Imperial Majesty, not only every Japanese is welcome to enter, but also any poet of any country in the world, Mr. Toyama's poem was among the comparatively few which were selected to be read before the Emperor; and it had received favourable comments upon its rugged beauty.

It was not only a natural appreciation of art that had caused Mr. Toyama to purchase the beautiful lacquer table beside which he was sitting reading the newspaper. He had made a study of lacquer ware during his years as a small merchant in his home town, which was in a strictly Buddhist district. Many times very beautiful pieces belonging to the home shrine of some ancient family would be brought to him for repair, and from this opportunity to

handle and examine old and rare pieces he was constantly learning more and more of the beauty-value of the lacquer art of old Japan.

The newspaper seemed to hold little of interest that morning for Mr. Toyama. He soon tossed it aside, and was leaning over gazing caressingly at the soft, velvety gleam of the dark table top, when a sudden thought caused him to frown and move restlessly on his cushion. His mind had gone back to the words of his wife, who was still dressing when he had come down to his breakfast.

"You go without me," she had said. "You can eat with Yukiko, and I'll have my breakfast brought up later. And don't you think," she added just as he was leaving the room, "that you had better talk with Mrs. Ikeda this morning?"

"Humh! Yes—ah, yes, Teruko. I—I suppose so. I'll attend to it," he muttered, as he stepped into the hall.

He was thinking of this now, as he sat impatiently tapping his finger tips on the table.

"I wonder if that could be called a promise. Humh! There's no hurry. Any time will do. Mrs. Ikeda—yes. I wonder if she has heard from her son yet!"

Masao Ikeda, Mr. Toyama's protégé, who with his mother lived in the Toyama home, had gone with some friends on a walking trip to the Japan Alps. He was a manly youth. Mr. Toyama was very fond of him, and as he had no son of his own he had fully intended to make the boy his rightful son through legal adoption, thus pro-

viding for himself a satisfactory and trustworthy heir to carry on his business after his own retirement, and at the same time, by marrying him to his daughter Yukiko, assuring the future continuance of the Toyama name. The widowed mother of Masao had agreed, and for several years this plan had been definitely understood between them. During recent months, however, unexpected problems had arisen, and Mr. Toyama had been much disturbed as to the wisdom of this decision.

This annoying state of mind, although not realized by Mr. Toyama, had been deliberately brought about by his young wife. Unlike her husband, Madam Toyama was dependent for happiness largely upon the pleasures of social life, and, naturally, her ambitions lay along those lines. In Mr. Toyama's years of changing environment he had frequently had to adjust himself to new standards, but his ambitions had always remained the same. They were confined wholly to business success, and to his daughter, his home, and his wife. Of late, however, he found that his desires were drifting into new channels. The acquiring and possession of riches no longer satisfied him. He began to have thoughts of social position, also. In inspiring this new ambition Madam Toyama considered herself not altogether selfish. She had a certain admiration for her husband's ability and success, and she very much wished him to rise to the position which, with her help, she was confident he could reach. Also she was interested enough in her stepdaughter's future to desire that the girl should

be freed from the shackles which, as the daughter of a narikin, now weighted her down.

For weeks after the idea of advancing the social station of the Toyama family first came to her, she kept silent about it, but she did much thinking. One evening she was lazily watching her husband as he sat reading the paper, when suddenly her thoughts suggested a plan.

Mr. Toyama was rather good-looking in his way, was always carefully dressed, and as he had generally held a rather prominent position among the people wherever he had been in business, he possessed a certain ease of manner—a little too cordial, perhaps—but on the whole, he was very presentable. But he had no personal vanity—no love for popularity. She could not arouse his ambition through himself—but there was Yukiko, the dearest treasure of his life. Ah, yes, there was Yukiko!

The days passed. Yukiko accompanied her mother to many small affairs, and silently the well laid plan matured.

One day when Mr. Toyama had come home elated over the successful outcome to a business transaction which had promised only discouraging results, his wife thought it a good time to bring forth her favourite topic. She spoke, as often before, of Yukiko as being a very beautiful and accomplished young girl; “worthy to belong to the nobility,” she said; and then she told of the tea which they had attended that afternoon, where Yukiko had received gracious attention from Marchioness Ikuta.

Finally, exasperated by her husband’s polite but mild

indifference, she boldly said that she thought it was the duty of a narikin to aim higher for his daughter's husband than his housekeeper's son.

Mr. Toyama had resented this at once. He didn't like her using the word "narikin" as a goad, and anyway, he himself was a plain man, and he saw no reason for looking among the nobility for a son-in-law.

"Where in all Japan," he had asked, "would one find a nobleman willing to become an adopted husband?"

Then his wife skilfully brought forward the name of her nephew, the grandson of Viscount Oku, who was not only a nobleman by birth, but also a clever and agreeable young man.

Mr. Toyama grunted his favourite "Humh!" and changed the subject. But just as slowly dripping water will in time wear away stone, so Madam Toyama, by pleasantly and persistently "buzzing like a May fly" on the same subject, succeeded, after several weeks, in overcoming her husband's hesitation and arguments, and finally won him over to agree with her.

That evening Mr. Toyama wandered over to the corner of the garden where was a bed of wild camellias, and as he stood gazing at the red and white blossoms he thought many things—for these flowers were connected with tender memories of Yukiko's gentle mother.

With a sigh he turned his steps back toward the mansion, walking slowly, with his head bent in thought.

"As Teruko says," he said to himself, "a husband from

the titled class will be a benefit to Yukiko. Her sensitive nature shrinks from the unpleasant associations of the name 'narikin.'"

For a moment he stood silent, thinking bitterly of his own ancestor—a brave youth, but only a foot runner to a noble warrior. Suddenly he lifted his head and stood upright.

"It requires as much courage and self-sacrifice to be a narikin," he whispered, almost aloud, "as it does to be a samurai—and it requires a lot more brains. In that misjudged word lies power! I cannot buy family for myself, but I can—and *will*—buy a place in a titled family for my daughter. Yes, she shall marry into the nobility. The best is not too good for Yukiko; and then she will realize that this honour came to her because she was the daughter of a narikin."

Mr. Toyama had postponed, time after time, telling Mrs. Ikeda that he had changed his mind about adopting Masao. "I'll tell her later on. Any time will do," he kept saying to himself. The immediate problem was to find some satisfactory plan by which he could justify himself in not carrying out his original idea and yet be perfectly fair to Masao by offering him a generous equivalent. He must take up that matter at once, speedily and thoroughly, as was his way.

And so, a few days later, he had a talk with Masao, telling him that he had decided to give up taking him into his own business, which, with Masao's scientific tastes, he

would find irksome anyway; and instead offered to send him abroad for further education after his graduation from the Imperial University next spring; and later on, as his guardian, he of course would continue financing him while he was choosing his own studies and planning his own life.

Mr. Toyama was honest in believing his proposal would be willingly accepted (what would he not have given for such a chance when he was a young man?), and when Masao had hesitated over the offer, his guardian was genuinely astonished

"Permit me a little time to reply to your generosity," the youth had quietly said, and, bowing courteously, had left the room, gently drawing the doors together after him.

In recalling this talk with Masao, Mr. Toyama felt pretty well satisfied, but he was uncomfortable every time he thought of the announcement yet to be made to Mrs. Ikeda.

"I'll wait until Masao returns," he said to himself. "He'll be here in a day or so. It's odd how much easier it is to explain things to a man than to a woman."

CHAPTER II

A LETTER FROM FORMOSA

MR. TOYAMA was at his desk, leaning over a paper written in large formal characters and bearing the name of Count Takesu. It was an honour to receive a communication from Count Takesu, and Mr. Toyama accepted it as an acknowledgment of his business worth; yet it evidently held some unusual message, for his face was slightly flushed and held an expression of pleasure.

There was the sound of footsteps on the porch. They paused at the door.

"Allow me to enter," murmured a soft voice, and the sliding doors were pushed open by a maid kneeling outside. Still kneeling, she slipped over the spotless mats and placed before her master a small lacquer tray. On it lay a long, rather heavy-looking brown envelope.

Mr. Toyama's keen glance flew at once to the postmark.

"Formosa!" he exclaimed under his breath, "and Masao Ikeda's handwriting! Humh! This is strange."

He had been wondering why Masao remained away so long. He should have returned by this time from his walking trip. Just this morning it had occurred to him to ask Mrs. Ikeda if she had heard from her son, but some trifle had interfered.

His silk sleeve rustled as he slowly folded the formal paper before him and carefully placed it in a large lacquer box that was dotted here and there with the conventionalized Toyama crest. Then he unhurriedly reached out his hand to the tray. Whatever might be his real state of mind, before others Mr. Toyama was always deliberate. With dignity he lifted the letter from the tray, with dignity he settled back upon his silken cushion, and with dignity he ignored the maid who drew the tray to her and bowed herself backward from his presence.

"Formosa!" he repeated, as he turned the long brown envelope over on his palm. "These modern young people are beyond my comprehension! What can Masao be doing in Formosa? And why has he gone off without a word of consultation? Always, before, he has come to me for advice before doing any unusual thing; which of course was only dutiful, as I am his guardian. This is strange. Yes, it is annoying."

He tore off the end of the envelope with a few jerks, letting the bits of paper scatter on the floor—quite contrary to his usual careful habit of tucking such scraps into the empty envelope. He read hurriedly, his strong left thumb pushing the long scroll of paper into loops which fell from his right hand in a long, curling roll. As his eyes swiftly passed up and down, up and down, up and down, from right to left, over the graceful, ideographic grass-writing, his bushy brows drew together in a puzzled frown.

When he reached the end, he sat for a full minute, his

eyes gazing thoughtfully at the folds of unrolled paper lying loosely on his knees. Then he lifted his head and, slowly rolling up the fallen loops, carefully replaced the letter in its envelope.

The sliding paper doors of the room were open wide, showing, beyond the narrow porch, the garden. The morning sunlight of early autumn, shining through the shrubbery, fell on his frost-tinted hair and his shaggy eyebrows, still almost meeting in the puzzled frown.

Presently he reached over to a small teak-wood box and lifted the cover, but the precise array of imported cigarettes seemed in some mysterious way to increase his annoyance. He covered the box and pushed it away.

After a moment or two he drew toward him by its slender, two-angle handle his Japanese tobacco box. Reaching behind the carved edge of its sunken top, he lifted out a long-stemmed silver pipe. With one finger he pulled open a shallow drawer and, filling the thimble-sized bowl with a pinch of tobacco, he bent over the tiny bronze brazier inside the box to draw up the life of the bit of glowing charcoal. Then he sat quietly watching the rising smoke, so absorbed in thought that he seemed to be reading some sign of wisdom in its floating curves.

Three slow puffs, and the pipe was empty. He tapped the bowl on the edge of the deep little ash tray, to dislodge the bit of ash before restoring the pipe to its place. Then he settled back quietly on his gray silk cushion and folded his arms.

"So!" he said to himself. "The boy has extended his Japan Alps trip to Formosa—has joined a government commission to investigate the raising of eucalyptus trees in that island! Humh! Even so, why did he go off without a word? And why this sudden ambition to be independent?"

Thoughts crowded upon thoughts. Every once in a while he would move restlessly or ejaculate his favourite "Humh!"

Mr. Toyama was indignant. He felt that he had made a fine offer to Masao, and it had been received without a word of appreciation—and now had come this unexpected letter from Formosa, announcing the boy's intention to live an independent future. Mr. Toyama felt that his dignity had been slighted—his suggestions ignored—his generous offer thrown back at him. Why, with his business associates—his equals, or even superiors—his opinions had always received consideration; and this boy, just entered into his twenties, had defied him. A boy to whom he had given home, care, and education since he was ten years old—to whom he had always been generous, and to whom he had offered a magnificent opportunity to freely choose and study for his lifework. Why, the boy was not only ungrateful—he was insolent.

The more Mr. Toyama thought, the more indignant he became. But, after all, he was a clear-headed and a just man; and when his indignation began to cool he reread the letter slowly and calmly. Now and then his keen mind caught some hidden meaning, unnoticed before, and each

time, he paused with a sudden "Humh!" He began to feel that he had been misunderstood. Masao seemed to consider his offer as only a bribe to free his guardian from the promise to adopt an incapable youth to carry on his business and in time become his heir.

"Now, that is not true," muttered Mr. Toyama. "I offered him a fair bargain and a rare opportunity besides. His foolish pride! Just like Masao! I never thought of his foolish pride! This is the kind of smart young men that universities send out in these days! Humh! He didn't recognize a splendid business chance when it was just in front of his hand! Humh!"

He took up the letter again.

"I do not wish," he read, "to put myself under further obligations to my generous benefactor." (Humh! as if I had ever begrudged the boy anything!) "I now realize that I am an only son, and as such I have a duty to my father's name. Since I must carry on my own family's name, I cannot exchange it for that of another."

"Ha!" grunted Mr. Toyama. "Pretty late to talk about that! It's all pretense!"

He readily guessed that what Masao really wanted to say was, "No amount of generosity can recompense me for the humiliation you have thrust upon me."

He thought deeply for a few moments, then he gave a dry little laugh.

"After all," he grunted, with a grim smile, "the boy has grit. I'll have to acknowledge that, had I myself been

in his place, I probably should have done exactly as he did."

For a while the grimness did not leave his face, but gradually it changed again into the puzzled frown.

"These modern young people are beyond my comprehension," he muttered. "As to not wanting to give up the Ikeda name, that is nonsense. As his mother was willing to give her son to the Toyama family, what right had he to object? And since it was his mother who agreed with me that he should marry my daughter and thus take the name of Toyama, what right has Masao to interfere? Such advanced thoughts are all bosh and upsetting to law and order. I have never suspected Masao of such tendencies. The audacity of taking it into his own hands to break family arrangements!"

A soft chime from the small alabaster clock standing on the zigzag side-shelf of the tokonoma interrupted his meditations. He glanced up and with a sigh reached for the silk cord and pressed the electric button.

"Better tell Mrs. Ikeda now of the change of plan," he thought, "and perhaps she can explain this peculiar letter."

There was the sound of mitted feet on the porch, and a maid was bowing at the door.

"Honourable Master, your errand?" she murmured.

"Ask Mrs. Ikeda to come."

The maid bowed and retired.

Ten minutes or so later a gentle middle-aged lady with

a pale oval face and widow-cut hair appeared at the door. She seemed a trifle self-conscious, but she bowed calmly, and with the merest inclination of the head drew toward her the cushion that Mr. Toyama's hand had politely indicated, with a "Please be seated." Although her position in the Toyama mansion was virtually that of housekeeper, the fact that she was of higher rank than her employer was always recognized in their greetings.

"You called me, sir?" she asked, as she draped the sleeves of her kimono over her knees with hands that trembled slightly.

"Yes," said Mr. Toyama. "I wish to speak to you on a very important matter."

He pulled toward him the small teak-wood box and took out a cigarette. There was none of the restful spirit of Old Japan in cigarette smoke. This, not the tiny pipe, was connected in his mind with business—and business was before him now.

Mrs. Ikeda waited in respectful silence while he lighted his cigarette.

At last, slowly, he spoke.

"My daughter Yukiko—" he said; then after a few puffs of his cigarette, went on—"I—I wish to say that, owing to your excellent instruction, my daughter is well trained in the accomplishments befitting a young lady's training, and——"

Mrs. Ikeda's eyes flashed open questioningly. She wondered why he had not mentioned Masao's letter. She could

see it lying there on the table, and she felt sure she knew the contents, for she herself had received a letter from her son that very morning. Surely it must be about Masao's letter that he wished to speak to her.

Mr. Toyama saw her eyes straying toward the letter with the Formosa postmark and quickly removed his cigarette from his lips.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "I see that you recognize your son's handwriting. I wonder if this most unexpected independence of his is as much a surprise to you as to me. I must say that it came to me like a dash of cold water on a sleeper's ear."

He waited for her to speak, but as she said nothing, he went on.

"I—ah—it has occurred to me that possibly he had taken you into his confidence."

For a moment Mrs. Ikeda held herself tense. Did he think she had known all this time of her son's plans—and had remained silent to his guardian? That would be a strange and a disloyal thing for her to do, and Masao would never desire it of her.

"I would have come to you at once, had I known of his intention," she said.

Her voice was gentle, but her pale face was tinted with unusual colour, and her body stiffened as she spoke.

For a few moments there was silence between them, then he went on slowly.

"There was a time, as you know, when I thought I

should take Masao into my business as soon as he had finished in the university, but lately I have realized that he is of a scientific turn of mind, and—to speak quite frankly—I have come to the conclusion that the management of the Toyama affairs calls for a business man who is at the same time a man of the world. Masao cares only for study and research. He will never make a business man. Besides, he now declares”—he glanced at the Formosa letter—“that his filial duty will not allow him to desert his family. Humh!”

Mrs. Ikeda understood the meaning of that “Humh!” exactly. She, as well as Mr. Toyama, knew that for Masao to speak of filial duty at this time was merely an excuse, as it had been clearly understood long ago that, when there should be little sons and daughters, at some future day, one among them would be chosen, as is the Japanese custom, to perpetuate the family name of the adopted youth who had given up his own name when he married.

Mr. Toyama hastily thrust the stub of his burned cigarette into the ashes of the brazier and took another from the box.

“So this seems to be the ‘last dance on the stage,’” he said slangily. “Masao has chosen for himself.”

Mrs. Ikeda was a very gentle-appearing lady, but she had the pride of her ancestors, and she understood her son’s reluctance to accept further generosity from his guardian after knowing that he was no longer expected to bear the responsibility and the duties of an heir. And, too,

she deeply felt his burning sense of being considered unfit for the life planned for him. And then to be offered—compensation! to be bought off!

“That has deeply hurt my proud son,” she thought, her eyes bright with pain and indignation. “He cannot sell his manly dignity for a bribed career. Others may—but not Masao!”

She looked over at Mr. Toyama’s honest, kindly, business-like face. A good man, but his soul was crude. He could never understand Masao’s high-principled samurai standard as applied to the value of money.

They were silent for several minutes; she sitting quiet and thinking rapidly—he smoking and wondering what her next words would be.

Suddenly she looked up with a smile.

“If my son has discovered in himself such strong filial duty,” she said, her voice warm with maternal pride, “then I am proud of him, and happy in his decision.”

“Yes, I am sure it makes you happy,” assented Mr. Toyama. “And so then”—he spoke with relief in his voice—“I think we may consider it settled that our former agreement will not be carried out. But,” he added musingly, “it is unlike Masao to rush off without a word to anyone. I should have expected him to come to me, his guardian, in a straightforward manner. I cannot seem to find a reason for his behaviour. And you say that you knew nothing of his intentions?”

“Oh,” she exclaimed, raising her eyes straight to his,

"I assure you, I knew nothing. I have had no word from Masao since he started out with his friends on the walking trip; that is, no word until this morning, when I also received a letter from Formosa. If you were astonished, I was more so."

She hesitated, then, catching her breath sharply, she went on in a low, hurried tone.

"For a few weeks past he has seemed rather moody, and that is why I encouraged the walking trip with his friends."

Her voice melted into silence.

"Hah!" Mr. Toyama stirred as if surprised, and his silk garments rustled. "A few weeks!"—his thoughts went back to his talk with Masao.

"Ah!—So!—Well—" he spoke with an effort, but he drew himself erect on his cushion—"as it seems Masao wishes to take things into his own hands, I see no reason for my continuing as his guardian. So, as far as I am concerned, he may consider himself free. Of course—" he paused as if haunted by memories of the past—"if I can ever be of any help, at any time, you can depend upon my willing assistance."

From the folds of his kimono he drew forth a large plain gold watch, snapped open the cover, and looked at its face.

"I am due in thirty-five minutes at a directors' meeting of the Kawaguchi Steel Company," he said. "As you go out, may I trouble you to order the car around?"

Mrs. Ikeda accepted the request as a hint that the interview was ended. With a slight bow she went out.

It was not required of her to go to the door to see the master of the mansion depart, but on this day some inexplicable desire to look casual made her join the five or six servants who appeared from here and there to stand respectfully in the wide entrance while the master was leaving.

His departure was attended with ceremony. From one of the maids he received his brown kid gloves, and from another his gold-headed cane. A liveried footman bowed him into the new and shiny automobile, closed the door with a flourish, and sprang in beside the chauffeur.

The car rolled smoothly along the pebbled roadway, and out between the stone posts of the gateway onto the outside road. In a moment the purring of the engine died away in the distance.

CHAPTER III

PICTURES ON A SHADOW LANTERN

THE car had no sooner gone than Mrs. Ikeda hurried to her own room, and pulling the doors close shut she sank down on the white-matted floor, her hands tightly clasped on her lap, and her head deeply bowed. She sat motionless for a long time, her mind a tangle of confusion through which she was conscious of nothing but a dull weariness.

Finally her thoughts began to clear; but instead of dwelling on the conversation with Mr. Toyama, they carried her back to days of long ago, and slowly the years passed before her, like the whirling pictures on a revolving shadow lantern.

A gay spring morning eighteen years before—her own pleasant home open wide and decorated with emblems of welcome. A portrait of a stately samurai with a face very like Masao was hanging in the tokonoma above an ancient sword-rest with its two swords; and her little four-year-old son, in holiday garments, was by her side. They had heard hoofbeats on the road and had hurried to the entrance to welcome the soldier father returning from the annual manœuvres of his regiment.

And then—instead of the dear, familiar expected one, a stranger stood in the doorway—an army officer in full uniform, holding in his hand a long official envelope, black-bordered. Her dazed eyes saw some blurred words “accident—sudden—” then her little son had pulled her sleeve, and she saw him looking up at her with frightened eyes. She took him in her arms and held him close to her breaking heart.

The picture faded into another of a sad-faced woman with widow-cut hair, smiling gently upon several happy little girls gathered around her, while she patiently trained their childish fingers to clip and press and arrange flowers, to graciously serve ceremonial tea, to use with skill the ivory thimbles of the koto—the thirteen-stringed Japanese harp.

As this picture whirled by, a soft smile touched her lips, for she saw a beautifully dressed little girl looking up into her face with shy, affectionate eyes.

“Honourable Teacher,” she was saying, with a wistful catch in her voice, “I will try harder next time.”

Dear, lonely little Yukiko! Only five years old—and motherless!

The picture melted into a confused medley of memories. The little girl’s father, a bluff, kindly man, proud of, and generous with, his quickly acquired wealth, after years of humble effort, had married a young wife from a titled family. The bride was beautiful and accomplished, but she had been returned to her father after an unhappy first

marriage, and so, according to Japanese way of thought, her life was marred and her future almost without hope.

Her father, Viscount Oku, however, unlike most titled men, was very practical. He was of noble birth, but his purse was empty; and for his family to be closely connected with a man of great wealth and generous heart was a thing much to be desired. Mr. Toyama was the owner of millions, but he was of humble birth. His friends and business associates eagerly pointed out the advantage to a *narikin* in being accepted as a kinsman by a titled family, and so the marriage took place; both parties considering it a satisfactory exchange.

The bride, well pleased with her unexpected good fortune, entered dutifully into her new life by treating her husband with a merry consideration which both surprised and pleased him; and by dressing her little stepdaughter in wonderful clothes, and overloading her playroom with expensive toys. But, too young and too selfish to be either a companionable wife or to fill a mother's place, she was good-naturedly willing that both should go their own way—the husband to his business, and little Yukiko on long walks with her maid, usually to Mrs. Ikeda's home, either for an extra lesson or to visit the teacher of whom she seemed so fond. So, gradually, the rich man grew still richer, and the lonely child found a happy refuge in the heart of her wise and loving teacher.

Then floated by the picture of "The Children's Afternoon of Flowers, Music, and Tea," to which, to encourage

her little pupils, Mrs. Ikeda had invited their parents and a few friends. The bluff, kindly narikin had come, and noticing with pleased surprise how free and happy was his shy little daughter, and how gracious was her gentle teacher, he, some weeks later, had asked Mrs. Ikeda to come and live in the Toyama home as a so-called "house guest," but in reality to be a motherly companion to Yukiko; and when he had learned that she had a small son, he had told her to bring the child with her. Gladly she had gone, and had so unassumingly turned her hand to this and that neglected duty about the house, that the pleased new wife—herself wholly inefficient—had urged Mrs. Ikeda to take complete charge. Thus, in a short time, she found herself pleasantly installed in the stately Toyama mansion as the responsible and dignified manager of the home.

Now happy pictures drifted by, one after another, of the two children playing or studying together in a happy companionship of big brother and little sister. He guiding her little hand as she held a brush-pen and scrawled crude hieroglyphics; or mending the arm of a broken doll while she, as nurse assistant, stood by, gravely calling him "Honourable Doctor," and holding a strip of tough paper and a small saucer of thick rice paste.

Next came a garden scene where twelve-year-old Masao was plunging knee deep into the goldfish pond to rescue the same much loved, unlucky doll, while Yukiko stood weeping on the curving bridge. Mr. Toyama, who had

watched the scene from a window, had turned to Mrs. Ikeda, laughing.

"The boy is always prompt," he declared, "and he never lacks courage. He is a suitable mate for my unbrave little daughter. I shall educate him for her husband."

It was like Mr. Toyama that, after a few days of quiet thought, he made inquiries, and learning that the Ikeda family was of rather high samurai rank in olden days, he, with kindness and vanity commingled, began to plan for the boy's education, saying that Masao should have the advantage that his own son would have had, had not the gods willed that he should have a daughter—but no son.

Then came another garden scene of a few years later. Yukiko, a demure lass just blooming into young womanhood, was seated on the base of a great stone lantern, a gay little workbag beside her, and her nimble fingers busily sewing together some bright bits of coloured silks. Near by was Masao, in regulation dark-blue school suit, with an Imperial University badge on the collar of his coat. He was leaning against the trunk of a tree, reading aloud, but stopping now and then to smile at his companion while he made some comment or explanation.

The picture faded into nothingness, and Mrs. Ikeda, with a heavy sigh, aroused herself.

"Ah," she murmured, "they would have made a good home for the little sons and daughters of the future—but that never is to be; for not to adopt unbinds the betrothal tie. My poor Masao!—and oh, my dear little Yukiko! Her

father did not think of her! No man can think of—no man is expected to think of— Ah, me! Ah, me! It cannot be helped. The gods are unkind.”

She sat quiet for a few moments; then she unconsciously lifted her hand to the back of her head, with the habitual movement of a puzzled Japanese woman, to lightly touch her hair as if to arrange it.

“He is a good man,” she said thoughtfully, “and yet he has carelessly tossed aside both the promise and the plan which he so eagerly urged upon me. That is his right, but what caused him to decide so unexpectedly? Or—*was* it unexpectedly? Can it be that Mr. Toyama had planned this very situation to come about? No. That is impossible. He is a kind man, and straightforward—almost blunt, sometimes—but never scheming or underhanded. This has not been a slowly thought out conclusion. It must have been a sudden decision. And yet today he seemed relieved rather than troubled over Masao’s letter. What could have caused this change in him? If it had been a gradual——”

Suddenly an incident flashed into her mind. A few weeks before, she had been coming along the porch that passed the Toyama rooms when she heard Madam Toyama’s high-pitched, fretful voice—not lowered, although the speaker must have heard the approaching footsteps.

“If you want to make sure of Minoru,” the voice had said, “you had better let me speak to my father at once. Minoru will be back from America soon.”

As Mrs. Ikeda recalled this, her eyes widened with sudden dismay and unbelief.

"No, no!" she whispered. "Mrs. Toyama could have no object . . . No, no!"

She half rose to her feet, then sank back, her face paling as her mind went racing back through crowds of incidents—picking up a word here, a look there, until, like a rapidly unrolling ball of cord, a single throbbing truth swiftly untangled itself from the puzzling mass and stood out clear and alone.

"Ah, could Masao have known?" she moaned. "My poor, proud son! Yes, it was best for you to go. But—Formosa! It is so far—so far!"

CHAPTER IV

TWO WORLDS

KOTOKO CHIBA walked slowly out between the tall gateposts, leaving the murmur of more than five hundred school children behind her. It would be in bad taste to hurry, she thought, as she had sent in a request to the office for a substitute to take her class the last hour of the afternoon; and she had given a headache as the cause of her sudden leaving. She put her hand up to her forehead. It did ache a little, but she had taught many a time when actually feeling worse, and she was mildly surprised at herself for so unhesitatingly laying aside her responsibility this afternoon. Her brother Ken, seventeen years older than she, who for years had been like a father to her, had always insisted on her strict faithfulness to every rule and custom regarding duty, and yet here she was, selfishly turning her back on one duty and hurrying forward with rebellion in her heart against another duty.

Her brother had always felt satisfied with "little Kotoko," as he fondly called his sister, but lately he had begun to feel vaguely uneasy about her, for she had objected to his making plans for her marriage—and he her elder brother, holding the duty and responsibility of her future!

As Kotoko walked slowly along the freshly pebbled road, she was thinking how happy she would be if she could only persuade her brother to allow her to marry the man of her own choice.

"Brother Ken is so hopelessly old-fashioned!" she sighed. "If only he were not so kind I might stand up against him, but it is hard to fight for my own way when he is so good and so patient. And yet, I *must* try again!"

She trudged along, but thoughts kept her company. She was remembering what a hard time she had had before Ken had yielded—and then very grudgingly—when she had wanted to become a teacher. But she had won in that, and what a blessing her teaching had been to her! It had opened a door of escape from the restricted life of women. She had a hushed feeling of pity for almost every woman she knew; all of them were dependent on father, or brother, or husband, or son; and every one of them must render absolute obedience to the one on whom she depended.

Kotoko was not mercenary, nor was she an advocate for Woman's Rights, and so when she had received the narrow brown envelope containing her first salary, her joy had been mostly a sweet, fresh sense of freedom. And it did not lessen as time went on. It was such a treasure—this new freedom—that she used it sparingly. Even in her formal friendship with the young men who taught in the same primary school, she always had been circumspect and a little timid. Perhaps it was this very modesty, coupled as it was with her ingenuous frankness, which had attracted

Minoru Oku, the grandson of Viscount Oku, who was a temporary teacher in the same school with herself.

Kotoko could look back without regret over her friendship with Minoru. Day by day, as they had met in the Teachers' Room, the best in her had responded to the best in him. In the school outings they had sometimes been assigned to the same class, and together had taken the first-year children to visit some celebrated shrine, to see the cherry blossoms, or to gather clams on the seashore; and the shared responsibility had been pleasant to them both.

A year had drifted by in this friendly fashion. Then had come the opportunity Minoru had been waiting for, an appointment to a San Francisco business house obtained through the influence of his grandfather. He had left, taking with him Kotoko's promise to marry him on his return.

They had written to each other frequently and fervently at first, but of late Minoru's letters had become less fervent and less frequent. Kotoko had said nothing of this to her brother, for he had never liked the correspondence, although he had not forbidden it; but now that Minoru was coming back she was jubilant, feeling sure that now her brother would see that his distrust had been unjust.

"But what if, after all," she asked herself, "Honourable Brother should not consent to the marriage?" And she paused a moment with a cold catch at her heart.

Just before her was an old temple, where there was a

short-cut through the grounds. She looked up at the massive gray-tiled roof and wide overhanging eaves, beneath which, far back, a few twinkling lights dotted the shadows. At the top of the steps a country pilgrim was murmuring a prayer, his work-rough hands holding a rosary of wooden beads which he moved rapidly as he murmured, "Namu, Amida, Butsu!—Hail Great Buddha!"

"How sincere he looks!" thought Kotoko, as she watched him. "I wonder if praying brings comfort to his heart!"

It had been a long time since Kotoko had worshipped at a temple. Her ideas were changing somewhat, and lately it had seemed rather foolish to go. But now something stole over her—some ancient instinct, perhaps—and, without really meaning to go at all, her feet carried her up the worn steps, her fingers cast a copper into the slat-covered offering box, her hands grasped the frayed bell rope, and while a muffled clang shook the cobwebs among the dim rafters, she bowed her head and whispered, "Namu, Amida, Butsu!"

The sound of her own voice startled her. She looked about hastily and hurried down the steps, somewhat shame-faced at this departure from her pose of modern skepticism.

She walked quickly on around the temple. At her left lay the crowded cemetery. She peered over the low hedge. Just yonder was her sister-in-law's grave—a temporary grave, for the ashes were only waiting for the time when

they would be removed to the home temple in the North. Poor Mikiko! If there were time, she would like to pour a dipperful of water over the simple stone, but the gate in the hedge was in the other direction, and it would take too long.

Poor Mikiko! How pitiful had been her meagre life, and how unnecessary had been the tragedy of it! It made Kotoko almost angry to think of it, although she did try not to blame her brother for what he could not help. The trouble was that Ken Chiba was too idealistic for the elbowing and pushing needed for success in present-day life. It had never occurred to him that he might try to adjust himself to conditions. He accepted his lot without complaint, and of course he expected his wife to do the same. To him, the noblest characteristic of wifehood was for the woman to share uncomplainingly the lot of her husband—her lord, whose every action was to be accepted and not questioned. If misfortunes came, they were inevitable, and could not be avoided nor even modified.

Kotoko was very different from her brother. She loved him and she pitied him, but she could not help feeling, deep in her heart, that if this modern world was so distasteful to him, he should have become a Zen priest and never married.

She came out into the lane behind the temple. Here she must pick her steps carefully, for the narrow way was full of humps and hollows, and the hollows were full of dirty water. It was one of Tokyo's hundreds of short-cut lanes

whose inhabitants were too poor to afford back yards, so the roadway was made to serve every purpose. On one side was a woman doing her laundry in a shallow wooden tub. Her flapping sleeves and tight skirt were fastened up out of the way, revealing her round red arms and faded petticoat. A little farther on, a half-grown boy was washing a bunch of long carrots. Just as Kotoko reached him, he tipped up his wooden bowl and dumped the water at his feet to make its own crooked way to the narrow drain by the side of the road. Had it been early morning, there would have been a group of gossiping women with buckets gathered about the hydrant, which in Tokyo had now taken the place of the old-fashioned neighbourhood well. Kotoko had often seen them when she lived with her brother in the broad street beyond, but now only old man Ito was there. He was bent almost double as he struggled to lift a big wooden bucket brimming with water.

"Shall I lend you a hand, O Ji San?" Kotoko asked.

"No, no!" he answered with a toothless grin. "If I get through my work too soon I won't have anything to do."

He looked up at her, and suddenly his lusterless eyes opened wide.

"Maa! Maa! It's Chiba San!" he exclaimed, setting his bucket on the ground with such haste that it splashed over his bare, straw-sandalled feet. Then with a grunt he put his hands on his knees and partially straightened up his back, which had become bent from long years of sitting on the floor, leaning over a charcoal brazier.

"Where have you been of late?" he asked. "It's all of two years since I saw you last."

"I was away studying, but now I am teaching. I live in the school dormitory, so when I come to my brother's home I usually take the other way. It is shorter."

Kotoko had always had a friendly feeling for old man Ito, and many a short neighbourly talk had they shared. Now she smiled kindly at him and waved her hand toward the dozen or so of tiny children playing up and down the lane.

"It looks as if your daughter has had plenty of business," she said.

The old man chuckled.

"Yes, it's a good location for a midwife. Mind you don't forget the address!"

Kotoko laughed and walked on, recalling the evening when she had run in such frightened haste to call the old man's daughter for Mikiko.

Poor, patient Mikiko! How joyful she had been when she knew that hidden safely within her was a new little life! How happily she had brought out her cloth piece-folder and looked over the scraps of her dresses of former days. And how busily during the long winter evenings her needle had flown in and out as she had fashioned tiny garments, into every one of which were folded happy dreams. Thanks to the midwife, the birth had been successful, yet Mikiko had seemed unable to climb from the

undertow of weakness into which her pangs had thrown her.

But Jiro, the baby, grew and thrived. His limbs became chubby, and soon his soft little coo changed to a gurgling laugh when he saw his mother. Then, about the time when the laugh revealed two tiny teeth, gentle Mikiko slipped away into sainthood; yet so gradually had life ebbed that Ken and Kotoko had both hoped, until the end, that the tide would turn and strength again flow into the frail body. But even her joy over her baby was powerless to hold her when the frosty, biting wind of December began forcing its way in through the cracks of their poorly built house.

Kotoko, thinking of all this, clenched her hands.

"As for me, I will never surrender to these musty old marriage customs," she muttered between tightly set teeth. "I shall choose for myself, and the trials and joys of life shall be mutual—not a one-sided, docile surrender."

The lane turned a corner, and Kotoko found herself at the entrance of her brother's home. For an instant she hesitated in front of the door. There was a little choking throb in her heart.

"Shall I be able this time to convince Honourable Brother?" she asked herself. "Or will I have to go home with the same baffled feeling I have carried away with me after every interview relating to Minoru Oku?"

She stood trembling a few minutes; then suddenly she lifted her head, and with it held high she pushed back the wooden door.

As it went sliding back, the bell above jangled briskly. Her brother was in the next room, reading. He unhurriedly closed his book and laid it on his desk.

"Well, Little Sister," he bowed with a kindly smile, as she entered, "aren't you rather early?"

"I wanted to see you before Jiro comes from school," she said quickly.

"Yes, I see. But how could you leave school so early?" he asked, his forehead wrinkling anxiously.

"Oh, it's all right, Honourable Brother. I notified the officer to send a substitute for my class the last hour."

"What!" he exclaimed, astonished.

"Why not? The substitute was not busy. I sent in word to the office that I had a headache."

"Kotoko!"

At his disapproving tone she felt a little of her courage slipping from her.

"I never thought my little sister could so lightly regard a duty. And besides, you may endanger your position if you are not careful."

"It does not matter. You see, Honourable Brother, I plan to resign before long, anyway."

"Resign?" He looked at her steadily. "I hoped you had given up that idea. But suppose you do resign, have you forgotten the old saying: 'The bird about to take wing should be careful not to stir up the mud in the pond where it has rested'?"

"Once more my poor brother's philosophy!" Kotoko

sighed to herself, thinking how different his world was from hers, and how blind he was to see there was any world but one. Her gaze travelled from his well shaped head and refined features to the almost shabby clothes, to the weather-stained ceiling, to the wall behind him, with holes in the crumbling plaster patched with pieces of used writing paper, and back again to his quiet, serene face.

"Little Sister," said Ken, "you are as like our mother as if you were her reflection in a mirror. Perhaps you don't remember her, for you were a very little girl when she passed away. But our father you must remember, although he died soon after and left you to my care. You have seemed like my own daughter."

Kotoko stirred. If only he would not work on her feelings so, she could present her side of the question better.

"I am sorry I have suffered from an ill fate," Ken continued, "and I fear that I have proved an unworthy brother to you; but whatever I have done or not done, during these years, my prayers are for your good fortune and your happy future."

He drew himself erect and looked steadily out of the window. His face was stern, but his sister knew he was holding back tears. With an effort she stifled the emotion that seemed about to overcome her. "I *must* speak!" she kept saying to herself, as she smoothed her long sleeves across her lap with one hand, then the other, in the unconscious, ages-old gesture of smothered anxiety.

After a few moments of silence she looked up.

"Honourable Brother," she said very earnestly, "I know I have given you much pain lately by my stubbornness, but I fear you don't understand the modern world. You misjudge Mr. Oku. He is a thorough gentleman, and his pledge to me is as sacred as any betrothal—as trustworthy as the word of a samurai of our grandmother's day."

Her face was pale with her effort to control herself. She pulled herself forward a few inches on the matting, her pleated school skirt billowing around her. Bending forward, she placed both hands on the floor before her, her head bowed in mute supplication. Her pose was rigid, yet the tremor of her shoulders told plainly of deep emotion.

Her brother's heart was touched. He did not resent the outspoken words of his sister; but he felt that he must guide her.

"She is idealistic," he said to himself, "and her ideals are coloured by too much of the modern spirit. Yes, I must be stern. She has always yielded to my sternness."

"Little Sister"—he spoke slowly, choosing his words carefully—"you may know much more than I do about the modern ways of the world, but you have lived too few years to know the heart of man as I know it. You must believe me when I say that only a mean man"—Kotoko had moved slightly—"or a careless—yes, a *cowardly* man will make advances to a young lady without proper sanction from their elders. You must remember that our

country has certain time-honoured customs which have not yet been uprooted by modernism. And I say again that I deeply resent any man's treating my sister like a common public entertainer to amuse himself."

Kotoko's heart was stung by her brother's hot words. Nevertheless, she recognized the deep concern beneath them, and she could not help feeling pity for his anxiety, although her heart was sore and heavy.

"Why has Mr. Oku not mentioned this important subject to me?" her brother continued. "There has been time. You have been waiting for him almost two years, teaching and allowing your youth to glide by, while he remains across the waters of the Pacific. I am your guardian. It is my right that he should consult me."

"In his letters to me," Kotoko murmured apologetically, her head still bowed, "he says that he will come to see you about this as soon as he reaches Japan. Honourable Brother, in ancient times all home laws were for the family only, but nowadays the dignity of the individual is recognized. I think this naturally extends to matrimonial matters."

Ken had picked up from his desk a limp paper-covered book, which he had been unconsciously rolling and unrolling. He now suddenly twisted it into a paper rod and gave his desk a sharp rap as if he could thus support the sternness of his manner.

Kotoko, startled, looked up. Her brother seldom gave way to his feelings in such a manner.

"Sister, yes. I know that nowadays there are plenty of so-called modernists advocating 'Emancipation of Marriage,' but to me they are little better than fools who girdle themselves with a rope of fire and expect to go unburned."

The intense manner of her gentle brother seemed to Kotoko pathetic and even a little ridiculous. She could not blame him for his fiery words. They were but the product of the different world in which he lived. Yet his accusation of Minoru Oku, whom she felt she knew so well, reminded her of the absurd story of a death sentence pronounced upon an innocent wanderer who unknowingly lost himself in the forbidden paths of a nunnery garden.

"Honourable Brother, is it not possible that since you have never met Mr. Oku you may misjudge him? He is to return to Tokyo very soon—the main office has sent for him—and I am certain that he will come to you at once to settle all matters relating to our marriage. Both of us believe that we have done right in becoming acquainted before entering into the holiest relation in the world. Won't you please try to understand us? Oh, Honourable Brother, your opposition is so—so awful!"

The last word was lost in a choking sob.

There was nothing more for either to say. Ken sat looking at his sister helplessly. Kotoko did not move. She was sitting with her head slightly bowed and her hands lying loosely in her lap. Her brother's insistence that Minoru was acting contemptibly had aroused a feeling which

lately she had been trying to crush—a faint suspicion that perhaps she had somehow failed to be all that Minoru wished; that for some reason he was disappointed in her. His last letter had given her the same sad heart-pang that had stabbed her many a time when at a moon-gazing party she had watched the silvery moon about to be hidden by a swift, dark cloud. “But, oh!” she told herself, “as surely as the moon beyond the cloud emerged still shining, just so surely will the love which Minoru and I share emerge undimmed from the cloud of this separation.”

Suddenly Ken looked up, his entire attitude changed.

“When is he to land?” he asked.

“He did not mention the exact date,” she said in a low voice.

Ken’s mouth drew into a straight, troubled line. He had heard one of his pupils say yesterday that Viscount Oku’s grandson was due in Yokohama on this very day.—And Kotoko did not know! He started as if to speak—hesitated—then decided to say nothing.

“It would be too cruel to tell her,” he murmured. “And after all, it may be best for my poor stubborn little sister to find out for herself whatever there is to learn.”

In the moment’s silence that followed, both were wrapped in their own thoughts. Ken was thinking, “If only she will open the eyes of her mind!” and Kotoko was thinking, “How sadly old-fashioned and unpractical Honourable Brother is! With all his great learning, he

cares nothing for modern ideas, or even—things. He likes best his own miserable surroundings.”

Then Ken spoke, trying to make his tone casual.

“Well, Little Sister,” he said, smiling at her as gently as a father might smile on an erring child, “you have our family trait. You stand on the rock of principle even to death; and pride makes a good companion for principle, even when it borders on stubbornness.”

Kotoko was thinking the same thing of her brother, but she kept the words in her heart.

At that moment the little swinging bell jangled as the door went sliding open. The eyes of brother and sister turned to the newcomer with a sense of relief.

It was Ken's little son, Jiro, now a boy of ten. He wore a shabby school kimono and pleated skirt, a schoolboy costume rapidly going out of fashion. His canvas school bag swung heavily against his left hip, its broad strap stretched diagonally from his right shoulder, and in his hand he grasped a giant white daikon, as the Japanese radish is called, and a small bunch of onions, which, with a maturity beyond his years, he had stopped to buy on his way home from school. Half embarrassed by his aunt's amused scrutiny, he jerked his cap from his head and, throwing it on the floor, ran out to the kitchen as if he had not seen her. Almost at once he reappeared, swinging his school bag by its strap. Quickly sinking to the floor before his father, he gave a jerky schoolboy bow.

“I'm home again!” he announced formally; then, turn-

ing quickly to his aunt, he said with grave politeness, "Honourable Aunt, we are favoured by your visit."

Greetings over, lively questions and answers flew back and forth, with incidents of school life and pleasant chatter of this, that, and the other, until Kotoko forgot her troubles—at least, for the time being.

"What a fine little fellow Jiro is!" she thought, "and how happy his mother would be, could she have lived to see him now! He is a small copy of his old-fashioned father—yet how much he looks like Mikiko too!"

The boy was eager for her to stay for their simple evening meal, to see how well he could cook the rice, he said; but she had duties at the dormitory, so, promising to come again soon, she left.

As she took her way homeward the heavy ache came back to her heart. She wondered if her visit had been wasted. She had not won her brother's approval of her plan, and what Ken had said about Minoru Oku had caused her to lose faith in herself. "But, nevertheless," she thought, trying to urge her heavy heart on toward cheerfulness, "my troubles were forgotten for a while. And also I have learned, by looking through the clear, fearless eyes of my little nephew, that simple, wholesome joy may be found even in shabby surroundings and a humdrum daily life."

CHAPTER V

COUNT TAKESU'S GARDEN PARTY

COUNT TAKESU stepped leisurely out upon the porch of his handsome, old-fashioned mansion and stood for a few minutes smiling pleasantly as his eyes followed the curving path of stepping stones wandering in and out among the shrubbery of the spacious grounds. He could catch glimpses here and there, through the trees, of scarlet-covered benches, and an occasional booth sheltered by red-and-white striped awning. Beyond the roadway leading to the entrance gates there was a group of maples—crimson and gold; and against the gray garden rocks, across the rippling stream that wended its curving way among the low green hillocks, were chrysanthemums—great, fringed beauties of white and yellow, whose delicate colours seemed almost too gentle to be in harmony with their surroundings.

“Nevertheless,” said the Count to himself, “the snow and gold of the blossoms against those gray rocks will make an excellent background for the butterfly dresses of the children in the games and races on the lawn.”

He nodded his head and glanced about with a satisfied smile. Yes, everything was in readiness for the Autumn

Garden Party—the sister festival of the Spring Garden Party—the two forming the greatest pride and pleasure of the Count's Tokyo life.

These two days of each year he opened his palatial home for the entertainment of all whose ancestors had been vassals of the Takesu clan during the old feudal days. For him and his older guests these few hours were a time of forgetting the modern world and slipping back into a land of memories; but memories were not yet for the youth of the clan. They brought with them such present-day healthful and happy merriment that these two afternoons were looked forward to by all with joyous anticipation.

“One could not ask for better weather,” thought the Count as he glanced up at the sky. The sunshine was unusually warm for November. It made the day a veritable “little spring.”

At this thought the Count laughed softly, remembering the American teacher, Griffis San, who had told him that those pleasant, warm autumn days were called “Indian summer” on the other side of the world. He wondered if the American was still living. And then his thoughts went back to his grandfather, who had called the scholar to Japan to teach the youths of his province. The grandfather had died long ago—a remarkable man, whose life was full of progressive acts, yet who was always saying that Japan's progress, to be true, must have its roots in the culture of the past.

The Count's musings were interrupted by a light step

behind him. Turning, he looked into the smiling eyes of the Countess, his wife.

"It is a beautiful day," he said.

The Countess laughed.

"It is not of that you were thinking," she said. "You were seeing a dream of the past. I know that look too well."

"Even so, it is not such a bad dream to see again," he replied. "I was thinking of Honourable Grandfather and of how far scattered is his great clan. We will see only a few of them today. He was the fifteenth of the Takesu line, and no finer daimio ever ruled in all Japan."

"Yes," she said gently, falling at once into his mood, "this house has every reason to be proud of him. And also of another Lord Takesu—the one who took the party of Catholic Fathers back to their homes across the Pacific in a little twenty-ton sailing vessel. Which grandfather was he?"

"How well you forget!" laughed the Count. "That little ship belonged to my fourth great-grandfather, but he himself did not sail with the party. He sent five of his samurai retainers. It would not have been possible to absent himself from his province for so long a voyage. It was eight years before that ship nosed into our harbour again."

"Maa! What a trip that was for those old days. But how does it happen that your mind has gone travelling so far backward today?"

"An odd happening," he replied. "That story has a connection with one of the guests I am expecting today—a descendant of the leader of that same party."

"So! Who is it?" asked the Countess.

"You might guess every day for a week and not hit upon him," said the Count. "It is Toyama—Teizo Toyama."

"Not Toyama, the narikin?"

"But it is."

"Ha! He's a newcomer among us, isn't he?"

"Yes. Only recently I found out about him. His descent from that leader is through his mother. On his father's side he comes from the lowest rank of our samurai—a courier-footman named Komazo. However, I was glad to discover him. He is a keen business man, and I believe will be valuable on the Advisory Board. He was voted in at our last meeting."

The Advisory Board the Count referred to was a group of thirty men whom he had gathered about him to act as councillors in the business affairs of the Takesu family. Without exception they were men descended from retainers connected with the family from ancient time who had come from the old province up to Tokyo, and were, most of them, making names for themselves in the capital. Believing that "in diversity of opinion wisdom is found," the Count had democratically picked his councillors from a wide variety of men; but although democratic in membership, they were all men loyal to old traditions, and there-

fore, so the Count believed, could be depended upon to keep alive the ancient glory of the Takesu family; for this board took the place of the body of loyal retainers he would have gathered about him had he been a daimio.

The Count was steadfastly loyal to his own belief in himself, and it was the fact that he was seldom wrong that consoled the Countess when she heard that a narikin had been admitted into this circle of intimates in which the Count took such pride.

"He may be very clever," she said to herself, "but he is not one of us."

The Count's voice was going on.

"Now, take this garden party of ours," he was saying. "Among the guests will be rich and poor, high and low; for we have invited everyone we could find who is descended from the old clan. Besides, there will be some of our titled friends, who asked me not to leave them out, although they are not of our clan. Yes, the real spirit of democracy will prevail here this afternoon."

"You are a real Lord Takesu," said the Countess, looking up proudly into her husband's face. "Your heart holds true to all that is fine in ceremonious Old Japan, and yet it has genuine concern and sympathy for the common people of today. Yes, Honourable Husband, you are a real Lord Takesu—a democratic aristocrat."

The Count had an amused but a kindly expression on his face as, he leading, and the Countess following, they went along the path of stepping stones toward the garden.

The guests were beginning to arrive, and already the air was alive with the murmur of many voices, pleasant laughter, and the merry shouts of playing children.

The Count, in a modern frock coat, and the Countess, in an informal gray *crêpe* with a delicate pattern of maple leaves, seemed to be everywhere, moving from one group to another, bowing, chatting, introducing, and moving on.

"Ah, there is Viscount Oku," said the Count. "This is his first time here, so I must look after him a bit. That is his daughter with him—Toyama's second wife."

The Count hurried away, but the Countess stood still for a moment, trying to recall what she had heard about the Oku family. They were a little outside her own circle, but—— Ah, she remembered now! It was said that the family had lived too lavishly and had run through what had never been a very large patrimony, and the daughter had married a millionaire. Mr. Toyama, of course.

She turned to greet a young woman wearing the pleated skirt of a school teacher.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Chiba," she said cordially, "I greatly appreciate your coming to help us with the children's games. They seem to be having a merry time. I hear their happy voices everywhere."

"I feel honoured to be of service to you, Madam," replied Miss Chiba, bowing respectfully.

"You belong with us, you know, for you are of our province. And your brother? Is he here?"

"Yes, Madam. He has gone with the young Master,

your son, to see the stone image with the old Chinese inscription."

"Ah, yes. With his profound knowledge of Chinese Classics your brother can read it, I am sure. He is one of the few. And how about yourself? Do you still like teaching?"

"Indeed I do!" replied Miss Chiba earnestly.

"What a modern young woman you are, starting out to make your own way in the world! I am glad you chose teaching. I think it is the most respectable profession for a woman in Japan. It's good to be modern—that is," she added with a smile, "provided one is not too much so."

"Too much so!" thought Miss Chiba. "I wonder what she would say of young women who choose their own husbands. Would she think them too modern?"

She turned to the Countess.

"Is it time to gather the children for the millet dumplings?" she asked.

"Yes, just the right time for them to get settled before the demonstration begins. The children should see it all."

"Then please excuse me!" And the young teacher hurried away to gather the boys and girls from their scattered games and direct them to the "Millet Dumpling Booth," to see for the first time, for most of them, what their ancestors had seen every holiday of their child lives.

As the Countess threaded her way from group to group, all pleasantly chatting or enjoying sandwiches, ice cream,

or osushi at one or another of the many refreshment booths, she was reminded of the Count's oft-repeated expression, "Our garden parties are only hundreds of bits of crystal, many-coloured and of different size, strung on a strong Takesu chain."

"How apt that expression is!" she thought. "Here are represented every class, yet nobody seems friendless or alone. Everybody is acquainted with somebody, and all are united in a common loyalty to the old province and the Takesu family. It's odd how the old clan spirit keeps untarnished through all the changes of modern life."

Seeing Mrs. Ikeda talking pleasantly with a group of young ladies, some in pretty, girlish foreign dresses, and others in elaborate long-sleeved kimonos, she went over and joined them.

"What a change has come over us, Mrs. Ikeda," she remarked.

Mrs. Ikeda was rather startled, thinking the Countess referred to her having left the Toyamas, and she was uncomfortably wondering how much the Countess had heard about it, when her mind was unexpectedly set at rest by the very next sentence.

"At our first garden party, about ten years ago," said the Countess, "almost everybody wore Japanese dress. Now look at our guests today. All of the men, except half a dozen or so of the older ones, and many of the women, are in foreign dress; and at least three fourths of the children are."

"And I prefer the one fourth who wear the kimono," said Mrs. Ikeda with a smile.

The Countess looked approvingly at Mrs. Ikeda's dark gray kimono and black haori with her family crest, all in quiet harmony with her widow-cut hair.

"Ah, yes. But you and I are hopelessly old-fashioned," she said as they started on together, Mrs. Ikeda modestly walking one pace behind the Countess.

"To me our own dress looks more beautiful on a Japanese woman," said Mrs. Ikeda, "and it certainly is better suited to our way of living. Yet our lives"—she sighed—"and now our homes are changing. All the young people want to sit on chairs and sleep on beds."

"I suppose we cannot change the current of the stream too suddenly," said the Countess. "So perhaps the best thing, for us who can, is to go on living in Japanese way until we also are caught in the current. We cannot be both ancient and modern at the same time."

"The Honourable Count is modern," said Mrs. Ikeda with a little laugh, "but I think his Advisory Board and his garden parties seem very daimio-like things."

The reply laugh of the Countess was soft and musical.

"The Count is a twisted strand of feudalism and modernism," she said.

They were approaching a booth that was surrounded by a gathering crowd, among them many children. From corner to corner it was gaily festooned with artificial flowers—long sprays of maple, wisteria, and branches of

cherry blossoms. Above, fastened by its side to a tall bamboo pole, was a narrow banner, the perpendicular characters more artistic than their message:

"Famous Eats!" "Millet Dumplings!"

"It's many years since I have eaten a millet dumpling," said Mrs. Ikeda.

"Time flies like an arrow," replied the Countess, bending her slender fingers, one after another, into her palm as she counted. "Yes, almost twice a decade has passed since we left our old home. I have scarcely seen you since—only occasionally at these garden parties; and then with hardly a chance for more than a word. First you were busy tutoring little girls in Tea Ceremony and Flower Arrangement, and my little Mariko was just getting old enough for me to ask your instruction, when I heard that you had gone somewhere as a governess. You will think me a hermit indeed when I tell you that I do not really know where you are now."

"I have been at the Toyamas' until recently. But the daughter is grown up now, and I am no longer there."

"Toyama?—Ah, indeed—yes. It's odd, isn't it—I've scarcely ever heard that name before today, and now I am hearing it twice in an hour! You have left there, you say? I remember you had a little boy. I suppose he must be quite large by now."

With her thumb and forefinger Mrs. Ikeda nervously smoothed the already smooth fold of her kimono over her chest. The Countess truly was a hermit, she thought, not

to have heard of Mr. Toyama and his wizardry in business, nor to realize how many years it had been since she had seen Masao as a wee tot.

"By your honourable shadow"—she bowed—"my son entered the university. Yes, it was really your shadow"—she bowed again—"for Mr. Toyama, learning that we belong to the Takesu clan, gave my son his education. But now, Madam, my son has a government position in the Department of Agriculture, and at present he is in Formosa."

"Ah! You must miss him!"

There was gentle sympathy in the voice of the Countess.

"He begs me to go to him, but——"

"Let us sit down, Mrs. Ikeda"; and the Countess led the way to a scarlet-covered bench near by.

"Thank you. I will stand here beside you, please."

"No, indeed! The ceremony of ancient days is past. I wish you to sit beside me."

"Thank you," murmured Mrs. Ikeda, and quietly seated herself beside the Countess.

"The dumplings will be exactly like those you had as a child," said the Countess. "The Count sent especially for these dumpling makers to come from our old province for today's party."

"I am sure everybody will appreciate his thoughtful kindness."

"Except, of course, the young people. They will probably scorn such primitive food."

"That is because they do not know how much their forefathers revered millet. I wish the Honourable Count would explain to the young people."

By this time a fence had been formed around the booth, made of many little boys in blue-serge school uniforms, and still more little girls, some gay in bright flowered kimonos and beautiful sashes, and others looking like fairies in fluffy white gowns with bows of ribbon tied on the ends of their black braids. Behind them stood the older children and the fathers and mothers.

The old man in charge of the dumpling makers came out, and quickly removing his bright yellow head band, he bent his body to a right angle, in a low bow to the Countess. Then he made another bow, a little less low, to the guests. Over his neat country kimono of printed cotton he wore a scarlet apron, and his loose flapping sleeves were fastened back out of the way by a twisted white cord tied crisscross between his shoulders. He was a jolly, comical-looking fellow, and when his two helpers, exact replicas of himself, rolled out in front of the booth a short section of tree trunk with a hollow scooped out of one end, the children watched every movement as if they were entranced. When this rude mortar was set upright, the two helpers brought wooden buckets of steaming hot millet and poured it into the mortar. Then each grasped a heavy wooden mallet, and, turn and turn about, one mallet swung high up above their heads while the other went—plunk! into the mass of soft dough.

A little boy in the front row clapped his hands in glee.

"The rabbit in the moon!" he shouted. "See! Two rabbits in the moon!"

Whereupon everyone laughed and clapped; for this referred to the well known folk tale of a long-eared rabbit pounding millet in the moon—a tale as familiar to Japanese children as is that of the "man in the moon" to the children of the West.

The two "rabbits" stopped their pounding long enough to bow solemnly to the children and hop about a bit in imitation of rabbits. As the children clapped and laughed, one of the rabbits twisted and spread out two pieces of paper and stuck them into his yellow head band for ears.

Then the pounding began again.

"Plunk! Thud!—Plunk! Thud!" went the mallets—up and down, up and down—accompanied by the chanting voices of the men in a rhythmic song that is ages old. As they sang, some of the guests took up the song, then childish voices joined in, everybody softly clapping in time with the rhythmic swing of the mallets, until there was such a merry chorus as must have astonished the usually quiet, serene garden.

Then it was finished; and like magic there appeared stacks of small red lacquer plates and numbers of wooden chopsticks, of the common kind to be used once and thrown away. The warm yellowish dough was ladled out in egg-shaped lumps, and a spoonful of brown sugar scattered over each. In a remarkably short time everybody

was served, and in another remarkably short time all the chopsticks were busy passing quickly between the lips and the little red plates. Another short time of chatting and laughing, and the rustle of gathering together the little plates and carrying them away to the seclusion of the millet booth; and then everyone suddenly became quiet, for there was heard a man's voice from the outside of the crowd.

"Speech! Speech!" it called, and "Speech! Speech!" was echoed from all directions. "Honourable Count Takesu! Speech! Speech!"

The Count stepped to the front and bowed. Every head before him bowed in response. He smiled happily. These were his people. He loved them, and something of his feeling warmed his words.

"Friends," he said, "you may thank our chief steward for these ancient and unique refreshments. He sometimes says I am too modern. Perhaps I am. In that case, so are you. He says we people of today are like ships in the wind, carrying with full sail a load of little weight—only new ideas and untried experiments. And he says that unless we take on a good heavy cargo of *old* things as ballast, we are in danger of upsetting. He is always saying that we should combine the old with the new, and as there is no better nor older thing in Japan than millet dumplings, he suggested that we have them this afternoon. I do not think he meant that millet dumplings would be a heavy cargo——"

Here were shouts of laughter, for millet dumplings are considered the most indigestible food in Japan. But in a few moments the Count, with a broad smile lighting up his face, lifted his hand for attention.

"Our kind steward's purpose was to remind us how valuable millet was to our ancestors. Our province, you know, never had famines in those old times; for our ancestors did not depend on rice alone. They always planted millet also. It is well known that when other provinces suffered from scarcity of food and turned to us, we were always able to help. Friends, that was foresight. Our ancestors had foresight, and it is foresight their descendants need today. Yes, in this age of indulgence and confusion we should encourage the almost forgotten spirit of simplicity and good judgment—mix in millet, as it were—when we are planning our work and our duties for the future."

He finished with a friendly smile to all.

"The Count! Banzai! Banzai! Ten thousand years!" shouted someone; and men, women, and children joined their voices to echo the hearty cheer: "Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!"

Slowly the crowd about the dumpling booth began to break up and disperse—just as feathered seeds by twos and threes separate and scatter from the ripened blossom of a dandelion. The Countess and Mrs. Ikeda sat quiet, watching the others drift away until the gay booth was almost alone.

"Honourable Teacher!" cried a clear young voice behind them.

Mrs. Ikeda turned quickly and stood up.

"Yukiko San!" she exclaimed. "Your father—will he like your talking to me? I left your house so abruptly——"

She spoke rapidly in a low voice.

The rosy colour came and went in the young girl's cheeks.

"Honourable Teacher," she said, "it is all right. He told me I might find you and ask you to let me come to you for Tea and Flower lessons, just as I did when I was a child."

She paused, her upper lip trembling with an emotion it would have been hard for her to define. There had been an interview with her father, to which she had gone reluctantly, but from which she had emerged with at least this treasure—that she might continue to see her beloved teacher.

Mrs. Ikeda looked thoughtfully into the girl's soft brown eyes. She saw loneliness there, and a little puzzled pucker between the brows.

"Yukiko San," she said hurriedly, "you shall have your lesson on Wednesday, as you have always had. The steward has my address."

Yukiko smiled gratefully and made a shy half-formal bow.

Then Mrs. Ikeda remembered the Countess.

"Madam, will you kindly allow to pass beneath your honourable glance Mr. Toyama's daughter Yukiko?"

Yukiko bowed silently, the long sleeves of her kimono nearly sweeping the ground.

"Ah! Yukiko San?" said the Countess with a gracious bow. "This is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting you, but I think I saw you and my daughter drinking tea together a little while ago, in the arbour beside the brooklet."

"Yes, Madam; I have the honour to be Mariko San's classmate."

"Then you must have had many pleasant things to chat about. But have you yet been to the souvenir booth? No, I see you still have your fuku-biki card in your hand. And you, also, Mrs. Ikeda. How about sauntering over there now, to see what fortune you will draw? I would go with you, but my duty now is at the entrance, as our guests will soon begin to depart."

"Yes, the shadows are growing long," Mrs. Ikeda said. "We will go at once to the fuku-biki booth. Thank you for your gracious suggestion."

She bowed again and turned away.

Yukiko followed her example daintily, her pensive face looking both serious and shy. Then she followed Mrs. Ikeda toward the souvenir booth, where they were to hand in the fuku-biki cards, which they had received on their arrival at the party.

"Fuku-biki" is a game of play on words, in which each card given to the guest on arrival holds a word suggestive of the fortune or fate of the owner. The word is puzzling

in its meaning until the guest is enlightened by the souvenir given him on his departure.

Yukiko had wondered about hers, off and on, all the afternoon. She knew it would be something in the nature of a pun or joke; they always were. On her card was a veiled allusion to "the sound of kane bringing happiness."

"Kane means metal. That must be money," she thought. "How strange that this should come to me, whose father has so much kane that people call him a narikin."

As the witty youth in charge of the booth handed her souvenir to her and explained the pun, Yukiko couldn't help smiling at herself for so quickly concluding that "kane—metal" could mean only money; for the "fortune" she held in her hand was an exquisite bronze model of a temple bell. She tipped it so that its tongue, dropping against its lip, dislodged a delicate petal of sound.

"I like it," she said simply.

"The original of your little bell hangs before the temple of our ancestors," explained Mrs. Ikeda.

"You have seen it? And heard it?" Yukiko asked eagerly.

"Yes; as I hope you may some day. But here is my souvenir! Let us see what my fortune is to be!"

"A trip to a distant land!" announced the dispenser of souvenirs, as he held up the tiny model of a ship in full sail.

"This," he added, "is the exact copy of the first Japanese ship to cross the Pacific—a sailing vessel that be-

longed to one of Count Takesu's ancestors; and as the Takesu ship always found a breeze to bring it home, so this fortune signifies 'A trip and a safe return!'"

"Perhaps we may accept this full-rigged sailing ship as a hint to leave this delightful party," said Mrs. Ikeda, as she and Yukiko turned away from the booth.

"May I walk with you to the gatehouse?" asked Yukiko. "I will wait there for my father—or he may already be waiting there for me."

They climbed the path of stepping stones from the lower garden up to the wide lawn at the side of the mansion, and passing around a clump of glowing maples, found themselves at the front entrance, where the Count and Countess were standing to bid their guests farewell.

"Who is that?" Yukiko asked, looking toward the young woman to whom the Countess was bowing farewell.

"It's Miss Chiba, a school teacher. Her brother, I believe, tutors one of the Takesu boys in Chinese Classics. Come, I will introduce you."

Yukiko drew back.

"No, please! I only wanted to know who she is. She seems so—so different, somehow. See!"—she suddenly started forward—"there is my father, coming to say farewell to the Count. I will join him. Good-bye, Honourable Teacher; I will come to you on Wednesday. Thank you."

Mrs. Ikeda watched her walk rapidly away.

"Poor child," she said, "she looks so alone in the midst of this gay crowd."

Then, with a heavy sigh, she walked around the path a bit, before going to make her farewell bow to the host and hostess.

Unusually tall was the Count, with a handsome head of thick black hair, and broad shoulders that he held with the dignity of an ancient leader of the Takesu clan. He bowed to one and extended his hand to another, thanking each for coming to his garden party. By his side stood the Countess, echoing her husband's cordiality, her usual formal manner permeated with a warmth of kindly feeling that won affection from each and every guest.

When the last one had departed, the Count and Countess stood looking out toward the big gateway, now lighted.

"It was a happy afternoon," said the Countess with a satisfied smile.

"The best garden party we have ever had," replied the Count happily.

CHAPTER VI

THE LADY OF THE MANSION

THE maid sat back on her heels and looked critically at the glowing charcoal nestled in the ashes of the bronze brazier. With the fire-chopsticks she changed the slant of a reddening coal—changed it by the merest fraction of an inch—but Madam liked it just so, and Natsu always tried to please her mistress. This was a good place to work if only one did not mind the many puzzling times of wondering how to please Madam.

She looked about the room to see that everything was in place. Perhaps the little electric heater was a bit too near the sliding silk doors which separated this room from the next. She knelt and drew it forward a trifle.

There was a faint sound of trailing silk behind her. She turned quickly and bent over in a low bow, with her forehead nearly touching the white matted floor.

“Good-morning, Madam!” she murmured, as Madam Toyama came from behind a screen placed in front of the door to the next room. It was a beautiful screen of six panels, showing an artistic mingling of the flowers of all seasons, every blossom of which proclaimed itself the work of a renowned artist of flowers.

Madam Toyama herself was not unlike a flower, al-

though on this particular morning a rather wilted one. Her light brown kimono, trailing over the white mats, was slightly open at the hem, thus revealing the edge of a pale green under-kimono, and an informal morning sash was belted about her slender figure.

"Good-morning, Natsu!" she absent-mindedly replied to the greeting of the maid; then, glancing languidly around the room, she sank gracefully upon a lavender silk cushion in front of her dressing table.

She sat back with lazy grace while she carefully examined the other self which looked at her from the mirror. The petulant expression of the full-lipped mouth troubled her not at all. She was used to it; just as she was used to the cold gleam of her black eyes shining through their long lashes. A further questioning, however, of her faithful mirror revealed the faintest suggestion of a line starting at the base of each aristocratic nostril and extending downward.

"Ah—this will never do!" she thought. "I must make a few visits to the Peony Beauty Parlour; or better still, I will send for the mistress of the place to give me a facial here at home. That will be more suited to a lady of my standing."

Natsu, meanwhile, was giving a deft touch here and there to the Madam's glossy black hair. It was arranged in a pompadour, divided slightly on the left, and had been so skilfully handled that it seemed as if every individual hair could be traced.

"Madam will not need the hairdresser today," said Natsu. "The hair is not disarranged at all. Perhaps Madam will not need her before Thursday, for the Imperial Hotel dance. Dances are not so wearisome as theatres, I suppose. Madam seems rather tired this morning."

"Natsu, you chatter too much. Here," extending her hand, "see whether my nails are all right."

Natsu selected a file from the ivory tray and touched the nails here and there, then she flashed the buffer a few times across their already shining surfaces.

"Will Madam breakfast here or in the next room?" she asked, as she returned her implements to the tray.

"Here. You know well enough that I don't care for a cold room. And you may tell your master to join me here when I have finished."

"Maa!" exclaimed the maid with a start. "May I be forgiven for forgetting to tell you! Count Takesu is taking the ten o'clock train for Tokyo, and Honourable Master has gone to the station. He left word that he would be gone only an hour, so probably he will be home by the time Madam has finished her breakfast."

Madam Toyama neither hurried nor lingered over her eating. From the moment the maid placed the low lacquer table before her, she ate daintily but steadily. In addition to the usual Japanese breakfast of rice, miso soup, and a dainty dish of pickles, there was an omelette on a piece of toasted bread. This last was a Western touch, which she

liked as a sign of being very up-to-date. When, at the end, she was sipping tea from a tiny cup, Mr. Toyama was announced.

Natsu would have liked to stay, but her mistress sent her away with the breakfast tray, telling her she would clap for her when she was needed. Nevertheless, Natsu lingered outside the shoji long enough to learn that the cause of her mistress's unusual ill-humour this morning was the young mistress, Yukiko. That would be something to tell in the kitchen, she thought, as she descended the stairs.

No sooner had Natsu left the room than Madam Toyama began to pour a torrent of indignant words into the ears of her husband.

"I'd like to ask you," she began, "what you think of Yukiko's behaviour last evening? At the theatre, too! She sat there as dumb as if her tongue had been cut out. Poor Minoru!—to be treated that way—and by the girl he's going to marry, too!"

Mr. Toyama also had been troubled at the theatre, for Yukiko had spoken scarcely a word to anyone the entire evening. Although the party had been arranged for the express purpose of giving the young people an opportunity to become better acquainted, it had proved an embarrassing occasion for everyone.

"And Minoru tried," Madam Toyama continued. "You cannot say he didn't try. He spoke to her several times, but she simply bowed in response, without any expression on her face. To my thinking, she doesn't appreciate her

wonderful good fortune. Not every girl who must take an adopted husband can get one whose grandfather has a title! Such young men do not drop their own names so easily, let me tell you! Minoru is magnanimous. Yes, magnanimous. But Yukiko—is she grateful? She is not! She doesn't even know how to write the character for grateful! And you—her own father—you do not seem a bit concerned. I cannot understand you! What would you do if Minoru should withdraw?"

What with indignation and imagination combined, Madam Toyama suddenly felt herself a much abused woman and burst into tears. But she didn't stop talking. She went on mumbling something while she dabbed her tearful eyes with the silken lining of her sleeves.

Owing to the few grains of truth hidden in her words Mr. Toyama hardly knew how to reply. He reached over to the tea tray and, selecting a small cup with a dainty blue-and-white design, he poured a cup of tea and slowly sipped it, gazing morosely into the clear amber liquid. Finally he spoke.

"Teruko," he said, "I know perfectly well how fortunate for us it will be to have a son like Minoru—since heaven has denied us a son of our own. If he had not been your nephew, I doubt if he could have been prevailed upon to be adopted by me. As for Yukiko—well, it is the first time she has ever been out in public with a young man. Probably her silence came from maidenly shyness—sitting in the next seat, so close, and all."

"Maidenly shyness!" exclaimed his wife, her half-quenched indignation once more fully aroused. "Maidenly shyness! How you do keep on indulging Yukiko, as if she were still a child. Why, she is almost twenty years old—already quite an old maid! Many of her friends are mothers already, and some of them twice over."

Mr. Toyama knew from previous experience that his wife's eloquence could not be stopped; so he said as little as possible, although he had to exercise some control to keep from quoting the old saying, "A man who owns even three pints of rice bran will not consent to become an adopted husband."

"Humh!" he said to himself. "Even so, it might be a temptation to the impoverished Oku family to suddenly come within reach of a treasure godown." However, there would be nothing gained by mentioning this to Teruko, so he tried to look the sympathy for her that he hardly felt.

With a sigh he took out his long-stemmed silver pipe and toyed with it, although he did not smoke. It was queer how helpless he felt sometimes; it was almost as if his wife were a stranger. She had never been his companion the way—— But he must not think of his first wife now. He must be calm and try to understand Teruko's point of view.

"Give the child a little more time, Teruko," he said in a quiet tone. "She understands the situation, and she doesn't dislike Minoru. She herself told me so. Give her time."

"All right! Make excuses! Don't say she was rude, no

matter how rude she was! All I can say is that Minoru was badly treated. But he acted the perfect young gentleman of the world."

"Yes, so he did," agreed Mr. Toyama. "Well," stroking his knees with the palms of his hands, "I will talk to Yukiko."

"Talk! What good is it to *talk*? What you ought to do is to keep her away from that woman."

"That woman!" he echoed in surprise. "What woman?"

"You know perfectly well that I refer to Mrs. Ikeda." She hissed the name as if she loathed to say it aloud. "You send your daughter to her to learn manners—and look at the rudeness she has learned! If it is for Flower Arrangement or Tea Ceremony that she goes, I am sure our new housekeeper can teach her quite as well."

He opened his mouth to speak, but she raised her hand for silence and went on talking.

"You know that she was absolutely infatuated with that Ikeda boy, and yet you permit her to visit his mother!"

She paused, out of breath, and knocked lightly upon her forehead with her fist, as much as to say that this affair had brought on a headache.

"Oh, please—please!" Mr. Toyama interjected. "That was only a childish affection—like a sister's. Yukiko will readily get over that. Give her time. As for Mrs. Ikeda"—he spoke sternly—"you misjudge her. She is too proud to allow herself to interfere with any plans we may have for Yukiko's future. She would even feel herself to blame if

things did not come out well for the child. She is old-fashioned in her ideals, and she has a sense of loyalty to Yukiko, as well as to this house which she called home for so many years."

"Well, I should think she might feel loyal, after all you did for her son! Such presumptuous hope as she had for him—to become the son of this house! Ridiculous! I cannot understand your allowing your daughter to go to that woman. After breaking such a would-be—or might-be—connection between her family and ours, I should think you could see how unwise—yes, I will say *foolish*—it is to continue the acquaintance. She is a mischief maker! I am sure she is!"

Mr. Toyama wished he could explain that Yukiko needed now, more than ever before, the motherly affection and counsel that Mrs. Ikeda knew so well how to give; but to try to explain this would seem to suggest Teruko's failure as a mother—and nothing was to be gained by giving Teruko offense. The best thing he could do would be to wait patiently until the storm of her feelings should spend itself—and that was not an easy thing for him to do.

He suppressed a sigh and said again, "It was only a childish affection."

"A childish affection—so! And a crafty mother who tried to fan it into a flame to warm her own fortunes! Well, all I can say is, there is danger that Yukiko will lose Minoru by her cold indifference."

She half turned her back, and pushing open a shoji she sat looking sullenly out through the sliding glass panels that ran along the edge of the porch.

"She will love him enough once they are married," said Mr. Toyama stubbornly.

"Exactly!" his wife quickly replied, whirling back toward him and tapping emphatically upon his knee with her long thin forefinger. "That is just what I have been trying to make you realize. We have seen three full moons since Minoru returned from America, and here he is still waiting. If it were for *me* to say, I'd take the earlier date suggested by the astrologer and get them married. That would bring the wedding three weeks nearer."

Her manner suddenly changed. She smiled upon her husband.

"You are right," she added. "They will undoubtedly make a devoted couple, once they are married. Of course, it will be a little difficult to get the trousseau ready by that time, but I am willing to do so. What do you say, Husband?"

Mr. Toyama looked at his wife with admiration. Whether she had intended it or not, she had been clever. She had found an excellent excuse for hastening Yukiko's wedding day, and her husband could see no reason for holding out against her suggestion.

The sound of soft footsteps was heard coming along the porch, and the next moment a maid was kneeling at the threshold with her head bowed to the floor.

"Excuse me, Madam," she said. "The clerks from Koshi store have come."

"Oh! Very well," said Madam Toyama. "Take them to the South Parlour. I will come presently."

As the maid withdrew, she turned quickly to her husband.

"They have brought some gowns for Yukiko. One of them, I myself helped the artist Hagi to design. I wish you would see it. I have been working like a six-foot coolie with all these wedding preparations. If you would only show a little interest, perhaps Yukiko would get interested too."

"I will follow you in a few minutes, Teruko," was Mr. Toyama's meek reply; adding thoughtfully as she left the room, "and I believe she is right. We must decide upon the earlier date for the wedding."

CHAPTER VII

THE ADORNING OF A BRIDE

THE South Parlour had taken on the appearance of a silk bazaar. Along the sides of the room clothes-racks of black-and-gold lacquer stood ready to receive the apparel which the clerks of a famous department store had brought. Some of the things were in large, deep trays, others were wrapped in big cloth furoshiki, while still others were in bamboo hampers. As the men took out garment after garment, they handed them over to the maids of the Toyama household, who in turn unfolded and draped their silken folds over the racks.

A pleasant confusion of colour, in silks grave and gay, lay in flat, half-unwrapped paper folders on the matted floor. Here was a tray piled high with embroidered silk and brocade for obis—the stiff, heavy outside sash which is the most important article in a Japanese woman's dress—each one neatly rolled upon its own wooden cylinder. And there was a hamper of flat white bundles from the two ends of which peeped silk and crêpe of gay patterns to be used for undergarments. In another hamper were long narrow boxes full of broad fancy strips of embroidered silk or crêpe for neck bands.

In the midst of this riot of rainbow tints Madam Toyama entered and seated herself. Her lips were curved in a pleasant smile, for she was still thinking of her victory in the argument with her husband. Like a monarch surveying his kingdom, she swept her eyes over the bright array filling the room, and her expression became keen and critical. This was her world. She could choose with unerring skill the very thing which would best suit each person and each occasion for which it was intended. In the realm of clothes none could surpass Madam Toyama.

The head clerk came quickly and bowed low before this wealthy customer. The two boys who had come to assist him did likewise. With all the polite expressions at their command, well interspersed with many an appreciative intake of breath, they thanked Madam Toyama for her patronage.

Yukiko, who had been sent for, slipped into the room so silently and unobtrusively that she might almost have been a wraith. But her stepmother's sharp eyes saw her and beckoned her to a cushion beside herself.

"I hope you are ready to take an interest in your wedding garments this morning," she remarked in an undertone to the girl. "It seems to me no more than natural for a young lady to be interested in her own trousseau!"

Yukiko bowed humbly. She knew she ought to show interest in these preparations. Her mother was very kind to go to all this trouble. If only she could conquer the numb feeling that seemed to have gripped her heart and

throat! Now her mother was looking at her and holding out an exquisite hand-pattern brocade. She must say something. She swallowed and drew a deep breath.

"It is beautiful! Yes, very beautiful indeed!" she heard herself saying; but it seemed as if it were some other person's voice. She was glad that her mother almost at once turned her attention again to the other garments, leaving her to herself.

An onlooker, seeing the enthusiasm with which Madam Toyama considered the quality of this piece of silk, or the stylishness of that particular pattern, would have been led to believe that she was choosing these garments for herself. In a way, it was for herself; for she enjoyed the thought of her friends' complimenting her on her taste and saying what a good mother she was to Yukiko. But she was sure that none of them would even begin to realize the hours and hours of thought she had given to the girl's marriage, or the hard time she had had to get her married to the right man.

The clerk placed a large oblong paper folder before Madam Toyama.

She looked alertly at the conspicuous ideographs written upon it and opened the folder quickly.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, greatly pleased. "It is just the right colour! See, Yukiko, this is your travelling dress; and you are to have a haori of exactly the same tint."

"It is beautiful," Yukiko murmured, as she bowed her thanks and lifted the delicate lavender folds in her hands,

to admire the dainty fern-leaf pattern woven into the material.

In her heart she wished for a moment that it had been blue; but as lavender was this year's popular colour no doubt this was better. Her mother's taste was sure to be good. Anyway, what did the colour matter?—or the time?—or the place?—or the man?—so long as her father was happy. That was the important thing—to be a dutiful daughter and please her father. He was doing everything for her good. And he was wise. Yes, she must believe that he was wise.

With an effort she turned her thoughts again to her trousseau.

Just then a steady, heavy step was heard, and the clerks all bowed low before the open door.

“At last your father is here!” Madam Toyama exclaimed joyfully. “Now we will examine everything and get his approval.”

Mr. Toyama acknowledged the greetings of the clerks as he seated himself on a cushion between his wife and daughter.

“Saa!” he said. “Now I'm ready to see all these wonderful clothes.”

He spoke so comfortably that Yukiko's heart was warmed a little.

“Honourable Sir,” said the chief clerk, “our humble store deeply appreciates your generous patronage.”

“Your service is appreciated,” Mr. Toyama replied.

Madam Toyama spoke up eagerly.

"You are just in time to give us your judgment upon *the* gown," she said.

"I must confess that I am wholly ignorant on the subject of dress, yet I am very glad to be initiated into the mysteries of this young lady's trousseau," he replied, gaily turning an imploring glance at Yukiko. He wished that he could say something to stir up a little excitement in her. It would please her mother so much. What ailed the girl, anyway?

Yukiko half smiled and moved a little toward her father, trying to look animated.

"Now, this!" Madam Toyama's slim finger pointed to the gorgeous gown which had just been spread out upon a rack. "The design is my own creation, with the artist's help. And the sun has smiled his kindest upon our family, for even the most skilled dyer could not get such a perfect finish as this if the sun had been banished by bad weather."

"Yes, Madam. It is exactly as you say," said the clerk, echoing her eloquence and bowing over and over again while he talked. "Very seldom does even our store have such good fortune with dyeing."

The gown was indeed an exquisite work of art. The lower part was decorated with a pattern, while the upper part was a plain, soft black on which the family crest seemed to float. It appeared in five places—once on the back, once on each sleeve, and once on each side of the front.

"I am glad the Toyama crest is such a pretty one," said

Madam Toyama cheerfully. "This double spray of drooping wisteria is decorative even in itself."

"And I see you have taken the 'Husband and Wife Rocks' as the decoration," remarked Mr. Toyama, leaning forward that he might observe it better.

"Yes; and see how much more perfect and fine the details are than is usual! And look at the large rock. How strong and majestic! And the smaller one—isn't it dainty and graceful?"

"Just like our Yukiko," murmured Mr. Toyama, looking at his daughter with a smile.

The interruption was passed over without comment. Probably Madam Toyama did not hear it, for she continued her enthusiastic description without pause.

"And see how bravely the two rocks are standing out in the sea with the waves dashing against them! Look how perfectly the white surf is brought out by the hair-fine silver thread that outlines it! Cannot you just *feel* as if the waves are trying to push over those immovable rocks?"

She paused for breath, her eyes sparkling with enthusiasm.

Mr. Toyama turned to his daughter.

"Mother has designed a magnificent wedding dress for our Yukiko," he said tenderly. "Now, suppose you tell us what it is you like best about it."

Yukiko glanced up at her father, then quickly turned her eyes toward the kimono, trying hard to think of something suitable to say.

He mistook her flushed cheeks for a sign of shyness.

"Come! Tell us what you like," he urged, laughing.
"Come!"

"I—I—it's the cranes flying. Yes, I like the cranes; they look just like real birds, so strong and free."

"And," her father added, "the snowy, pure white wings tell the meaning so plainly of your name; Yuki—Snow."

"Indeed they are splendid cranes," Madam Toyama agreed. "The stronger bird looks so vigorous, with his wings spread to their fullest extent. He is flying, you see; while the gentle bird is about to respond to the call of her mate. The artist, Hagi, was a very great help to me," she concluded, looking about at her small audience, elated at the attention they had given her while she was explaining the design.

"Yes." Mr. Toyama spoke as if well pleased. "Yes, I must say the gown is a wonderful success. And the design is most appropriate as well as beautiful. I like the sentiment—those rocks standing so bravely side by side, in the midst of the dashing waves, and joined by a strand of prayer—or love—or—or something."

He leaned over and looked tenderly into the flushed face of Yukiko, whose head was slightly bowed. He believed that he could read her inward thought, and imagined her saying, "Father, I shall do my duty as your filial child."

"I beg your pardon, Madam," said the chief clerk,

speaking apologetically for the interruption, "will you be so good as to look upon the honourable white robe?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure," Madam agreed, although it was evident from her tone that the "honourable white robe" was of less consequence in her eyes than the dress they had just seen. This was to be expected, as there was no opportunity to display artistic ability in the more formal gown.

He spread open the stiff paper folder showing the gown. It was as soft as down and as white as snow.

"Death robe," he murmured.

Yukiko looked up, startled.

"Death robe?" she repeated wonderingly.

"Why, to be sure!" exclaimed her mother, glancing at Yukiko, surprised, and talking exactly as if reciting from a book. "You know that when a girl marries she leaves her maidenhood and her family behind her as irrevocably as if she had died; that's why her dress is white—the colour of mourning. And then she puts on the red dress—the colour of the dress of a new-born babe, because she goes into a new life in which her honour, her pride, her whole interest for the rest of her life are in her husband. You've known that all your life, Yukiko."

"Yes, of course," murmured Yukiko. "Why, yes. I—I just happened to—to think of it. I——"

Her father touched her hand gently.

"It's the same thing," he said, "as when an ancient samurai pledged his life and his all for his Overlord. We so

often do not think of the deep meaning of things. I don't myself."

"And see! This is the other!" exclaimed Madam Toyama eagerly, as the clerk untied and spread out another paper folder holding a gown of scarlet brocade.

"This is the second gown.—It means loyalty and submission to your husband. You ought to realize these things in marrying," she said, glancing rather severely at Yukiko. "And it has the marriage emblems woven beautifully in the goods—pine, bamboo, and plum blossoms."

The woven design of the scarlet brocade was intermingled branches of pine, bamboo, and plum, carrying the message to every bride, "Be unchanging like the pine in all seasons of the year; yield in gentle obedience like the swaying bamboo; yet, like the fragrant plum, blossoming beneath the snow, never lose the gentle perseverance of loyal womanhood."

"That's good advice for an indifferent or thoughtless bride," concluded Madam Toyama, as she folded over the cover and nodded to the clerk. "Now suppose we look at the obi."

For another hour or longer they inspected obis—broad and narrow, stiff and soft, embroidered, dyed, and woven. Then came hair ornaments, footwear, and tens and tens of other beautiful essentials in a bride's trousseau. Madam Toyama's enthusiasm rippled on, Mr. Toyama showed unflagging interest, and Yukiko sat as one in a trance.

"Death robe!" The words echoed and reëchoed in her

mind. Yes. They were putting a death robe upon her; death to the future—death to the past—death even to the right to remember.

She had not thought of that before. Yes, death. But her father must not know! He must never know!

CHAPTER VIII

ECHOES FROM THE KITCHEN

THE Toyama mansion was buzzing with the excitement of the coming wedding. In the kitchen the maids were gay, in spite of their added duties and longer hours. All the beautiful rarely used things must be brought out from the godown where they were kept safely stored away from fire and thieves, and every article must be counted, cleaned, and polished in readiness for the happy occasion.

"O Sugi San," said one of the maids to another, as she allowed her busy hands to rest a moment from their energetic polishing of a gold lacquer soup bowl, "I am—I believe——"

"Be quick and say it," replied Sugi, "for I can see by your manner that it is something you ought not to say; and therefore I want to hear it before anyone comes in to prevent."

"Well, you must remember this is just a secret between you and me, but I can't help saying that I am storing up tears for our young mistress."

"What do you mean? Have you heard anything?"

"No, no. But haven't you noticed how changed she is? She's so quiet."

"Quiet? She's always quiet—at least, that's what she's

been ever since I came here. She's the least gay of any of her friends. Now, take Ito Sama——"

"Oh, it's not that kind of quiet I mean. Maa! O Sugi San, if only your eyes weren't so set in the direction of that new mail carrier, perhaps you'd see more that goes on in this house. Our poor young mistress! So lifeless and indifferent! She's not at all the same girl she was. Why, O Sugi San, in her last year at the Young Ladies' School she was the tennis champion of her class. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, and I remember, too, the day she came into the kitchen and fussed about our not putting enough rice into her lunch box."

"And now her breakfast tray comes back to the kitchen almost untouched. It's a shame—that's what it is!" mourned Fuyu.

"Sssh!" suddenly whispered Sugi.

At that moment another maid appeared, carrying a large whitewood box. The corners of the hem of her blue cotton kimono were tucked into her belt, revealing a gay pink petticoat, and over her head was draped a blue-and-white towel.

"You seem to have been in the godown," said Sugi. "Pretty dusty?"

"Huh!" sniffed the newcomer. "It's about what you might expect." She knelt on the smoothly polished board floor and carefully set down the wooden box. As she lifted the cover, her face flushed with sullen anger.

"What has happened?" the others exclaimed in one voice. "O Kimi San, tell us."

"Huh!" Kimi looked about her, lowering her voice cautiously. "That new housekeeper! I haven't words to say what I think of her! At the end of every sentence she says, 'In the home of the nobility, so and so,' or something like that. And yet she doesn't know a true work of art when she sees it!"

"But she came from the home of our mistress's father—and he's a viscount," said Sugi.

"So she did," retorted Kimi. "But when she saw this most precious treasure of the Toyama family," lifting a beautiful old bronze incense burner from out its yellow cloth wrapper inside the box, "what do you think she said? She said she didn't suppose the Master would care to have this old thing out. Those were her very words—'this old thing.'"

"What did you say?" asked Sugi eagerly.

"Oh, I was polite enough. I told her the Master treasures it very highly. In fact, that it is his dearest treasure."

"And then?"

"Huh! She's a good bluffer, she is! She put on her 'home of the nobility' manner and said she was only thinking that in some homes such an ancient thing might be considered out of place at a wedding."

"Mrs. Ikeda and she are as different as an autumn full moon and the back of a mud turtle!" said Fuyu.

The three maids exchanged sympathetic glances and

lightly pressed the ends of their long sleeves to their lips to keep their mischievous laughter from sounding beyond the kitchen walls.

"When Mrs. Ikeda was here," continued Fuyu, "our duties might be ever so hard, yet she made them seem cheerful burdens. Now everything——"

"Sssh!"

Ton-ton! The sound of felt-soled sandals was heard approaching. The maids resumed their duties. Fuyu and Sugi began energetically to polish the gold lacquer soup bowls, making their silk wipers fly. Kimi set the bronze incense burner on a low table and began looking about with slow deliberation for a silk duster.

In the wide doorway appeared the thin, angular housekeeper they had been discussing. For all her forty years she sometimes had a hesitating manner, as if she were not quite sure of herself; so now she stood a few moments watching the busy, silent girls. At last she flipped the silk wiper, which she also carried, in the direction of the enclosed shelves, built in along one wall of the kitchen. Her mouth stretched into a severe line before she spoke.

"Girls," she said sternly, "when you have finished polishing those things, arrange them on the shelves. Then count them. Then give me a list of them."

"Hai-i-i!" the trio chorused dutifully. "Your order shall be obeyed."

With that the housekeeper drew herself up to her full height, which was above the average, and departed. The

girls slackened their energy as the ton-ton of her sandals was lost in the distance.

"A cat trying to wear a tiger's skin!" snapped Kimi.

"Really, I suppose it is too bad to hate her for what is not altogether her fault," said Fuyu, who was older than the others and more thoughtful. "After all, she is not to blame because our young mistress is unhappy. But she truly *is* disagreeable!" she added with a frown.

"Well, we have to find fault with *somebody*," said Sugi, "and she's the only one in the house who is *wholly* disagreeable."

And she laughed, for Sugi was young, and the cares of life sat lightly upon her.

"We know we are unreasonable," said Kimi, "but how can we help it, when it's all because we love our young mistress?"

"You are right, we do love her," agreed Sugi, "but it seems to me our young mistress is altogether too gentle. Nowadays young ladies in her position speak out. They don't hesitate to say what they think."

"But that is not her way." Fuyu shook her head sadly. "She is so filial and obedient that she always obeys her father about everything."

"Moreover," said Kimi, "the adopted-husband-elect is Madam's nephew, and Madam is the young mistress's stepmother. In this household the law is made by the pointing of Madam's little finger. See?" She mischievously lifted up the little finger of her right hand and the thumb

of her left hand, and with the little finger described circle after circle around the thumb. "She winds him—like this."

"Oh, but did you see our future master when he called last evening?" Fuyu leaped to a new topic.

"Whether we saw him or not, I am sure everyone in the house knew he was here," replied Kimi emphatically. "For an hour after he went away, the drawing room and the hall were perfumed. He's 'high collar,' you know, and quite a dandy."

"He's a contrast to Mr. Ikeda, who was always so manly," said Fuyu, with a sigh.

"Well, I'm glad *I'm* not a daughter of the aristocracy," said Kimi, "to be moved about like a puppet on the stage. I think it's a ——"

Ton-ton! Ton-ton!

"Sssh! There comes the cat again!"

CHAPTER IX

A GODDESS FOR A GIFT

YUKIKO sat before her richly polished mahogany desk and toyed with an ivory paper cutter. In her left hand she held a letter that had just been brought to her. The envelope was one of the artistic sort in fashion among young ladies and schoolgirls. On it was the picture of a willowy, pensive maiden gazing into a pond at the reflection of the moon.

Yukiko smiled as she looked at it.

"It's safe to guess it's from Fumiko," she thought.

She turned it over and found that her guess was correct; for there were the name and address of Fumiko Ito, her former classmate. A thrust of the ivory blade, and Yukiko drew out several closely written sheets of paper, each decorated with the picture of the pensive maiden.

It's a very long time since last I saw you [so the letter ran]——

"It really isn't so long," said Yukiko to herself, "only four or five weeks; but all letters have to begin that way."

Her eyes raced through the season's greeting and the polite words at the beginning and came to the second page. Then she read slowly:

Our Class Club held a meeting recently from which you were purposely excluded, as we met to decide on a wedding gift for you. It was a very long meeting, because at first each of us had a different idea as to what you would like. You see, you are a very difficult person——

“How unconventionally frank Fumiko is!” Yukiko thought with a smile.

Then again the letter:

Tamako thought we should give you something appropriate to your name, but “Yukiko—snow”! We just simply couldn’t think of anything so pure and delicate as fresh-fallen snow. We are sorry we couldn’t, for your name is so exactly like yourself. I think we never realized, until we were talking about it that day, how identical you and your name are. Even when you are sparkling, you are cool, and when you appear anywhere you are so modest and unobtrusive, so ready to melt away.

A mist in Yukiko’s eyes dimmed the paper for a moment. The girls’ exaggerated opinion of her was true in their eyes, she did not doubt, and she was glad they thought of her in that way; but they did not know, nor should they ever know, of the hidden fire in her heart over which her memories must sometimes tread unshod—like the fire walkers in the temples. No; the girls need never find out about the fire. They must always think of her as Yukiko—snow.

Snow! Suddenly she remembered something she had read in one of her school books about snow. How it keeps the warmth in the earth during the cold winter, then melts into the soil and prepares it for the food and blos-

soms of the coming spring. She must be like that; she must comfort her father in his old age. She must live out her name for her family's sake. Yes, she would be dutiful.

After a moment she turned again to Fumiko's letter.

Just when it seemed as if we might have to adjourn without accomplishing the object of our meeting, Mariko Takesu made a suggestion which we unanimously recognized as *the very thing*.

So now, Yukiko Sama, if I have completely aroused your most honourable curiosity, I beg permission to present to you what is really a very insignificant gift, after all.

Please wait for my coming at ten o'clock on Wednesday.

To Yukiko Toyama Sama.

From Fumiko Ito.

Scarcely had Yukiko put back the letter in its envelope and placed it in a carved ivory box when her maid, Miyo, appeared at the door.

"Young Madam, Ito Sama is calling," she said with her black head bowed almost to the floor. "Will you see her in the smaller reception room?"

"No, you may bring her here, please."

A young girl came to the door, and dropping to her knees, bowed low with elaborate formality, then slipped over the doorsill and seated herself just inside the door.

"Allow me to introduce to you," she said gravely, lifting her hand lightly toward her face, "the very important representative of our Class Club—myself—for today I am two people."

Another slow, deep bow.

"Oh, Most Honourable Emissary," responded Yukiko, with an equally ceremonious obeisance, "I bid you welcome. I am most humbly appreciative of your condescension."

The two straightened up and looked into each other's faces; then both broke into a ripple of merry laughter.

"Please, now," said Yukiko, pushing a cushion toward her friend, "take this and make yourself so comfortable that you'll forget to go home."

"Thanks. It's almost too pretty to use," but she drew the wine-red cushion to her and settled down upon it comfortably.

Miyo, assisted by another maid, appeared at the door, bearing a low whitewood stand, on which was the wedding gift which Fumiko had brought. A beautiful, embroidered scarlet silk cover, with the Ito crest in the centre, hid the gift from view.

"A present from the guest!" Miyo announced, as the two maids knelt and placed the stand before their mistress.

"Yukiko San, it's just as I wrote in my letter," said Fumiko, "we had great fun deciding on the gift, although we were somewhat anxious too. You see, we wanted not only to express our true friendly feeling but at the same time to give you something appropriate. You are always so gentle and serene that anything jolly or funny would be an unfitting gift for you."

"It was lovely of you girls to plan so carefully," said Yukiko.

"But we wanted it to be just right, of course; so we do hope you will like the idea."

"Indeed, I shall value this present more than any other that I receive," said Yukiko, deeply touched.

"I suppose that showers of pearls and tents of brocade are coming in every day, but our gift is not of that kind. Really, its only value is that it holds memories of our five years of school together. See if you can guess what it is—something serene and calm and beautiful."

Fumiko's voice sounded so anxious that Yukiko couldn't help smiling.

"Well, it stands up quite high and humpy, and as you girls know the kind of things I like, I'll guess that you've brought me a goddess for a gift—the goddess Kwannon. Now, haven't you?"

"Arra!"

The sharp exclamation came from the maid Miyo, who sat waiting just outside the open shoji. To her superstitious heart the goddess Kwannon was too strong a reminder of the "Paradise of the Dead" to be a good omen for a wedding gift. But Fumiko laughed outright.

"Yukiko San, that is the trouble with you—always looking at things too seriously. This is not Kwannon, the goddess of Mercy. We want to bring you a good-fortune gift, so we chose the one and only lady in the family of the gods of Fortune—Benten, the goddess of Beauty."

"To be sure! How stupid I am!" Yukiko assented quickly, her embarrassment tinting her cheeks slightly.

"But I am the devotee of Kwannon Sama, and really these two goddesses don't seem so unlike to me. Please don't mind my stupidity."

"I really believe they *are* alike!" Fumiko agreed. "And after all, the spirit of charity and the spirit of beauty are equally lovely. Maa! Maa! What a philosopher I am getting to be!—And there's another thing too, that I didn't think of, that makes our gift appropriate. The coming year, you know, according to the signs of the zodiac, is the 'Year of the Serpent,' and Benten Sama is the personification of serpent year, signifying Wealth and Beauty. So that makes it all right. And here she is! Let's look at her!"

Yukiko lifted off the embroidered cover revealing a beautiful and ingeniously wrought gift. The goddess Benten was standing in the "Treasure Ship of the gods of Fortune," riding on the swelling sea. The figure was fashioned out of beautiful silks and brocades, beautiful hair ornaments of jade, coral, and pearls and many other beautiful things, all of which later would find a use in the bride's wardrobe. Goods for a kimono had been folded into the semblance of the prow of the Treasure Ship, in front of which broke the waves of a pale blue under-dress. A whole bolt of scarlet crêpe had been caught up with invisible stitches to make the trailing kimono of the court costume of the goddess. The robe had trimmings of bits of embroidered pieces which would some day become the neck bands of different dresses, and over the brilliant

robe was an overgarment of transparent silk gauze shot with threads of gold and silver.

In her right hand Benten clasped a half-open fan of exquisitely carved ivory—the symbol of dignity. At the same time, its widening shape was an expression of good wishes for an ever widening prosperity. Such a piece of art might some day serve as an ornament on the tokonoma of the reception room.

Above the delicate face of the goddess was her elaborately dressed hair of black silk threads. Her hair ornaments, placed at the front of the fanciful chignon, represented the wealth of the sea—pearl, coral, and mother-of-pearl, while in the centre was a silver serpent—the spirit of Benten.

Miyo came forward on her knees, nearing the stand and bowing low before lifting it to carry into the room where were all the wedding gifts.

“Miyo,” said Yukiko a little wistfully, as if she wished her favourite maid to share in her joy, “I am very happy over this gift.”

“Young Mistress,” responded the maid, “of all the beautiful presents that have come for you, I do believe you care the most for this one.”

“Yes, Miyo, I do. I can scarcely say why—but this gift from my classmates seems to me more beautiful and full of expression than any other. Perhaps it is because I know how sincere is the sentiment in the hearts of all the girls.”

Fumiko's face beamed.

"How happy I am that you like it! And how happy the girls will be when I tell them what you just said."

As Miyo left the room with the gift, another maid entered, carrying the usual tray of tea and cakes for the guest. To refuse them would be rude, so Fumiko had an excuse to spend a little more time with her friend. As she snuggled comfortably down on the wine-red cushion and lifted the tiny cup to her lips, she smiled at Yukiko as if she were still a schoolgirl.

"Yukiko San," she said, "I feel this morning as if I had slipped back to years ago. As I was coming up the drive it almost seemed as if I were coming once more to your 'Seven Stars Surprise Party.'"

This party, planned a few years before by Mrs. Ikeda for Yukiko and her classmates, had been a celebration of the Tanabata Festival, which is held every year on the seventh day of the seventh month, when the Great Dipper crosses the Milky Way. This plain astronomical happening has through the ages been beautified into a charming legend, bringing with it many customs, pretty and interesting—and one sadly sweet story which all young girls love.

Tradition has it that in the olden, olden time there lived in the heavenly regions a stern god whose daughter was such an industrious weaver that she was considered a model for the maidens of all the weaving villages of the Earth. But she was so absorbed in her weaving that her father began to despair of her ever marrying. However,

he chose for her a husband, a youthful herdsman of the heavenly region, and they were married.

Then another trouble arose, for, alas! the bride became so wrapped up in her new life that she neglected her weaving until cobwebs covered her loom. Her father was again in great distress, lest the Earth maidens also should forsake their looms, and thus bring about a world calamity. Thereupon he issued an edict, which could never be withdrawn, that the newly married couple, for the sake of their godly duties, must henceforth live on opposite sides of the Heavenly River, called by Earth people the Milky Way. Yet later the father relented and permitted the sympathetic magpies to build a bridge across the stream, so that the couple might meet once a year.

So it is that on the seventh day of the seventh month, the Earth maidens, especially those of the weaving villages, hang gay offerings on the bamboo branches and pray for fine weather; for if even three drops of rain fall on that day, it will cause the Heavenly River to overflow. Then the separated lovers can only gaze sorrowfully across the water and call farewell to each other for another year.

"Do you remember, Yukiko San, how surprised you were when we all arrived so unexpectedly at your home the day of the Surprise Party? Your face turned white and then it turned red! Oh, but every one of the thirty-two of us thought it the jolliest party ever! And your pretty young mother—how vivacious and charming she was!"

"Yes, Mother enjoyed it. I was surprised, for she is

usually indifferent to what she calls 'ancient customs.' But that day she even wrote a poem-plea for dry weather."

"And she hung it on that red sash beside yours and mine! Oh, Yukiko San! Weren't the bamboo branches just simply gorgeous with the silk cords and sashes festooned all about! They looked as if the goddess herself had woven a rainbow and dropped down bits of it for us to see!"

Fumiko paused just long enough to take a hasty sip of her tea, then went on, enthusiastically living over again that happy day.

"And when we all had our poems written on the long gold and silver cards and had hung them on the bamboo branches, what fun we had playing 'Catch a demon' in front of our gorgeous decorations!"

"You were the first one to be 'IT,' Fumiko San. Don't you remember how tight you wanted the blindfold band? Dear me! And then the way you flew around! Your long sleeves waved like butterfly wings! And the poem I picked from the bamboo tree was the one Mariko Takesu had written! And she was the very one I caught!"

It seemed strange that the fortune Yukiko had written that afternoon, long ago, should come back so distinctly to her now. She sat very quiet, looking out of the window. Level with her eyes, across the strip of enclosed garden, was the wing in which Mrs. Ikeda had had her rooms. And thinking of the day of the party there came to Yukiko a memory of the voices of half-a-dozen boys mingled with

bursts of song and care-free laughter. Some of Masao's university friends were visiting him that afternoon, and in her poem she had put a thought of him; but he never knew that. She wondered if he had known of the party. But of course he had—only his manly dignity would prevent his showing either curiosity or interest in anything so feminine as a Tanabata party. Yet, once or twice, she fancied she had caught a glimpse of the boys on the farther lawn. And surely she had seen their heads bob up two or three times above the brush fence when they were on their way home. And she remembered that in the evening Masao had remarked how splendid the weather had been for an outside affair. Oh, yes, he had known.

Well, all such things were now in the past. Mrs. Ikeda was gone, Masao was gone, and in a few more days—She sighed.

Fumiko's stream of merry chatter stopped suddenly.

"Yukiko Toyama! You have not heard a thing I've been saying for the last five minutes! And you look as solemn as a Chinese sage! Anybody would think you are not glad about all this—and you so lucky!"

With an apologetic smile Yukiko bowed slightly.

"Everybody is doing so much for me, I—I am overwhelmed with all the kindness—I feel so unworthy."

"Unworthy! What a funny thing to say!"

"I can't explain, only I feel so undeserving when I think that all this fuss and buzz and excitement are for me—just for me. It seems to put such a responsibility on

me, somehow. And all the wonderful presents that have been sent! Oh, Fumiko San"—with a sudden change in manner—"wouldn't you like to go in and see all my gifts?"

"Oh, wouldn't I!"

CHAPTER X

THE VOWS OF SAN-SAN-KUDO

MADAM TOYAMA was inwardly aglow with excitement and happiness, although outwardly she held herself with the proud dignity which should grace a mother on the day of her daughter's wedding.

"It is a great satisfaction to have the plans move forward so smoothly," she said to herself. "Yukiko is exasperatingly slow about expressing an opinion, but at least she doesn't interfere with any of the arrangements, and she has been ready every time, without even once keeping anybody waiting."

Madam Toyama had seen to it that the whole household was up early on the morning of the important day, and that every duty had been timed to a minute. As soon as Yukiko's bath was over, she found her light breakfast waiting for her, and immediately after came the Beauty Parlour artist and her assistant. No sooner was the glossy hair arranged in elaborate bridal style, with the heavy tortoise-shell combs and bars, which are considered symbols of long life, and the coral ornaments, meaning self-sacrifice, all in place, than the assistant was ready with her pots of cream and paste and dainty little

brushes. When the face and neck were entirely covered with a thick, smooth white powder, the soft white undergarments were put upon her, and after being tied and belted with cords and bands, then around and around her slender body was swathed an entire bolt of thin, snowy gauze. She stood, looking like a plaster image, slender and graceful, but almost moveless in her doll-like quiet.

Then was put on the pure white kimono, with its stiff narrow sash, signifying death to all joys and duties of the past. Above it, last of all, was placed a long, trailing, scarlet-lined overgown of snowy white. The white cap of silk floss covering the head and face to the shoulders, which was the fashion of her mother's day, was now no longer used, and instead, Yukiko wore—in front of, but not hiding, the shell and coral ornaments of the hair—a filmy white band, the meaning of which is the same as that of the bridal veil of the West.

Since she was not going into the Oku family, but was receiving Minoru to become the son of her family, Yukiko was not taken, as is usual with a bride, to bid farewell to the tablet of her ancestors; but instead, the go-betweens took the young couple—Minoru in Japanese pleated silk skirt and ceremonial crest coat, and Yukiko in the snow-white garments of death—to the shrine room to be presented to the ancestors of the Toyama family.

There, before the house shrine, they knelt side by side, while the fragrant incense sent up slender spirals of

smoke before the ancestral tablet on the altar. Yukiko's head drooped, and her eyes were fixed, unseeing, upon her hands, which lay lightly on her knees, while Minoru made a profound obeisance in token of his pledge of loyalty to the Toyama family. Indeed, for the moment he was nobly inspired with a sincere desire to be always faithful to the new family, which henceforth was to be his own.

The marriage ceremony took place in the palatial reception hall. At the farther end of the great room was the tokonoma where was hanging a magnificent scroll picture of "Dawn," showing the sun rising in rosy splendour from the smooth, rolling waves of a boundless sea. On the dark, mirror-like platform beneath stood the horai—a marriage emblem which, sometimes magnificent and sometimes crude, is present at every wedding in Japan, whether in the Imperial Palace or the humble hut of a charcoal burner.

The horai is a wave-shaped, whitewood table, on which, under an aged pine tree, is standing the image of an old man and an old woman. The old man holds a bamboo rake, and the old woman a brush broom, with which they are gathering up the pine needles fallen from the tree above. This old couple is supposed to typify "happy married life," and the white storks on the branches above, and the long-tailed tortoise on the rocks beneath, are emblems of long life, health, and prosperity.

The sliding silk doors on two sides of the long room had been lifted off, thus throwing three large rooms into

one spacious hall, in which, on silk cushions on opposite sides of the room, were seated the parents and near relatives of both families.

Presently there was a slight rustling sound, and the Count, with Minoru, came in from a door on the left of the tokonoma, while at the same time the Countess and Yukiko entered from a door on the right.

Everyone in the room greeted them with a long, low, silent bow, not raising the head until the groom and bride had seated themselves on opposite sides of the tokonoma, facing each other, and the go-betweens had taken their places in front, with their backs to the audience.

There was an impressive pause. Then two young girl relatives entered, each bearing a low whitewood stand. Kneeling, they placed one before the groom, the other before the bride. Each held a bit of kobu, a seaweed meaning "gladness," tied in an odd, one-sided form, called "The Nuptial Knot."

A third maiden brought, on a high whitewood stand, three red lacquer cups, saucer-like in shape and piled from largest to smallest in a pyramid. Then the two maidens again came forward, this time bearing odd-shaped vessels of dull, satiny metal—one a dipper-shape, having a foot-long handle, and the other round and flat, looking not unlike a low teakettle. Both were decorated with white and red papers folded very beautifully in the semblance of butterflies. These vessels held wine made from rice. It is called "the spirit of the grain," and ac-

according to Shinto belief is revered not only because it represents the toil of generations of ancestors, but as being originally the gift of the gods.

The maidens knelt before the groom, lifting high the wine vessels and pouring with three quick tip-up motions—first from the long-handled one, then from the other—a small amount of wine into the topmost cup. The groom, deeply bowing, lifted the cup and drank just three sips, as slowly and reverently as if he were in a sacred temple ceremony, or partaking of the Lord's Supper in a Christian church.

Slowly and gracefully the maidens, stepping in a curious, curving line, crossed over to the bride and placed before her the same tiny cup, pouring wine into it in the same ceremonious way as for the groom. Yukiko, as reverently as did Minoru, bowed over the cup and lifted it to her lips for the three tiny sips.

This ceremony was repeated with the second cup, the only sound in the room being the soft "suiff-suiff-suiff" of the white-mittened feet as the maidens made their circling way across the space between the groom and bride. Once more this was repeated with the third and last cup—three sips—three times—nine in all: three, three, nine times—San-san-kudo. Thus, in the presence of the gods and the relatives of both families, the groom and the bride gave the silent promise which made holy the vows of San-san-kudo.

This was the sacred part of the ceremony. The civil

part had been completed the day before, when Minoru Oku's name had been transferred to the Toyama family register at the Tokyo Municipal Office. Thus was Minoru adopted into the family of Toyama, and from then on, by the laws of Japan, he was no longer Oku, but Toyama.

At the close of the ceremony Yukiko was led away by the Countess. Her white dress of "death to the past" was taken off, and in its place she donned the scarlet brocade signifying that now she was newly born into a future life of loyalty and faithfulness to her husband.

In this scarlet gown, symbolizing Yukiko's dutiful future, she received congratulations and countless wishes for happiness from relations and a few close friends; but in less than an hour she was whirled away by the Countess to change the scarlet brocade for the magnificent garment of the rope-tied rocks bravely withstanding the dashing waves. This was the magnificent gown designed by Madam Toyama for the big reception which was to be held in the largest banquet hall of the Imperial Hotel.

In donning this third gown it was fortunate that Yukiko needed only to stand still here or there, and do this or that, as she was told; for what with the stiff magnificence of her dress and high-tied sash, and the unaccustomed weight and tightness of her coiffure, she was tired, excited, and somewhat dazed.

A little later, after a swift motor ride through the streets of Tokyo, she found herself standing in a line, with Mi-

noru, the Count and Viscount Oku on one side, and on the other, the Countess and her father and mother. She was bowing endlessly to a kaleidoscopic succession of ceremonious haoris and five-crest black kimonos, of morning coats and low-necked foreign dresses, and gay kimonos with long, sweeping sleeves.

Since both families were of note, one in business and one in society, their friends and acquaintances were many. Besides the classmates of Yukiko and the personal friends of Minoru, there were a score or more of titled personages with their wives; many men of distinction in various professions, a few with their wives; and a number of business men of importance, many with their wives.

As Madam Toyama had planned that this banquet should stand out as one of the notable social events of the season, great care had been taken to include in the list of guests a number of slightly known but prominent and exclusive families. Therefore many of the guests were, to Yukiko, absolute strangers; so it was with the feeling of a long-drawn breath of fresh air that she heard a familiar voice in the line approaching her. The next moment Fumiko Ito paused before her.

"You perfect Princess Doll!" she exclaimed. "You look simply—*lovely!*"

Yukiko's reply was eager.

"Fumiko San, tell the girls that the one request I made about the wedding was that you are all to sit at the table next to mine."

"That's just like you! How did you ever guess we'd rather look at a lovely bride than eat?"

Fumiko's voice was fading away in the receding crowd, but she called back: "Yes! yes!" just as Mariko Takesu and several other girls came up together.

"I've been looking forward to this wonderful day for weeks!" said Mariko. "Everything is perfectly lovely!"

"I'm so excited just to be here!" said the girl beside her.

Then followed a confusion of exclamations and giggles, and lively remarks as the girls passed by, giving place to more formal and dignified congratulations.

But Yukiko's eyes followed the merry group rather wistfully. She had an absurd feeling that this day was to separate her forever from her girlhood and girlhood friends—from everything of the past.

"May I offer congratulations and wish you happiness?" spoke a gentle voice.

Yukiko turned quickly to behold the serene face of Mrs. Ikeda. For a moment they looked into each other's eyes. Something of the older woman's peace and strength seemed to pass over into Yukiko's heart. She said no word, but in her slow, graceful bow, Mrs. Ikeda thought she saw a calm, passive acceptance of Fate, and it gave her hope that life for Yukiko and her handsome young husband would be one of calm and peaceful content.

There was a stir among the guests as in some mysterious way it became understood that dinner had been

announced, and presently all were making their slow way toward the spacious banquet hall. At the big doors there was a moment's pause, then, laughing and chatting, and each holding a dainty little ribbon-tied card, the crowd flowed on like a joyous river, groups breaking up only to merge into other groups, still flowing on and spreading throughout the big room of fifty-four flower-decorated tables, where gradually they settled in rustling, chatting circles, like a river rustling and rippling around the islets of its delta.

The guests had no trouble in finding their places. Each table represented a volume of *The Tale of Genji*, a famous novel of fifty-four volumes written by a court lady in the tenth century. This novel is so well known throughout Japan that no public explanation of the cards was necessary. Each table was decorated in accordance with the poetic spirit of the book it represented, with a flower or a sign, and each little be-ribboned card had on it a flower and a poem which directed the bearer at once to the proper table.

"A plum branch is the picture on my card, Fumiko," said Mariko Takesu, as they met at the table with the plum blossom sign.

"So it is on mine," exclaimed Fumiko with delight. "I'm so glad, for that is the favourite blossom of the bride."

She held up her card. Across one corner was painted a branch of plum blossoms, and beneath was written,

*The fragrance of the blossom
Does not linger on the branch
From which it falls;
Yet still its haunting sweetness
Scents the sleeve of one who plucks it.*

"Why, that's from *The Tale of Genji*," said a girl from across the table.

"Everybody's is," said Mariko. "Haven't you looked at your card? Just watch the people find their places. It's fun, isn't it? It was Madam Toyama's idea. She's a wonderfully bright woman."

The girls had been coming, one or two at a time, all delighted to find that the classmates were to be together, and also next to the "Old Folks' Table"—as Fumiko mischievously called the bridal table, because Minoru and Yukiko were the only young people there; all the others were go-betweens, parents, grandparents, venerable representatives of absent relatives, and several prominent gentlemen who were expected to make congratulatory addresses.

When all were seated, Count Takesu, in a few simple words, introduced the groom and bride—young Mr. and Mrs. Toyama. As the feast, which was long and elaborate, progressed, there were, now and then, speeches of congratulation not only from the bridal table, but also from a number of old friends; for a wedding in Japan is not a personal, but a family affair, the young couple being

only the very precious and much valued instruments to carry on the plan of the gods.

At intervals, Countess Takesu led Yukiko to another room to change her kimono, each change being greeted with a flutter of excitement at the table where Yukiko's classmates were.

"See!" said Mariko, when Yukiko appeared in a pale blue kimono with a graceful pattern of maple leaves. "Every dress, so far, represents one of the books. Plum, cherry, and now—maple."

"That pale blue with rosy-edged clouds and maple leaves is wonderful!" said one of the girls. "It's like looking at the sky through the branch of a maple tree, isn't it?"

"Maa!" whispered another. "She can't keep this up for all the fifty-four volumes—notwithstanding a narikin pocketbook."

"Hush!" said Fumiko. "She's the sweetest girl of us all!"

"Oh, look!" Mariko interrupted. "There is going to be an entertainment! Nothing is lacking! Oh, isn't this just a *perfect* wedding?"

"Yes, in every way!" replied two or three others.

"Well," said the girl on the other side of Fumiko, "I'm glad to see a perfect wedding for once in my life. I just know I'll marry some poor man and will have to be content with an afternoon tea instead of a banquet."

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," said Fumiko.

"I've set my heart on marrying an exporter, as my sister Hatsuko did, and on going to live in some far-away country."

"Where?" asked someone.

"Oh, I don't know—perhaps nowhere," replied Fumiko with a sudden sigh. "One never can tell! Our lives are destined—so there's no use planning."

"But one can hope!" said Mariko.

They had turned their chairs a little, so they could the more easily watch the troupe of actors who had come to perform an old classical "No" on the small stage near the bridal table. It was a beautiful lyric drama of olden time—a song-play of congratulation and wishes for happiness.

At last the elaborate banquet, with its many beautiful ceremonies and pleasant social enjoyments, came to an end. In all these the bride herself had had no part. Quietly and with lowered eyes she received congratulations; quietly and with lowered eyes she listened to the speakers; quietly and with lowered eyes she sat at the table where she was not even expected to eat the fine foreign food set before her.

But at last her final duty arrived, and she found herself at the entrance of the hall, again standing beside her husband, with the go-betweens and the parents on either side, and with them she was thanking the guests for gracing the occasion with their honourable presence.

Finally the last bow was made to the last departing

guest, and Yukiko turned away, her ears ringing with the many expressions of delight at having been invited to this wonderful affair.

She would have been glad now to go home, to return to her own quiet room. But instead she was hurried into the lavender travelling dress—haori and all—and started off on a journey; for like all newly married couples of social standing, modern custom prescribed a honeymoon trip for young Mr. and Mrs. Toyama.

CHAPTER XI

EMBERS

NIKKO, the very name of which signifies "splendour," was the place chosen by Mr. Toyama as the ideal spot for the honeymoon of his beloved daughter and his new son. A honeymoon they must have; for that was the proper thing for young people of the present day, and none of all Japan's most beautiful places was more beautiful than Nikko in autumn. There, with the hills clothed in a brocade of reds and yellows that vied with the magnificence of the famous shrines, the young people would arrive in a spirit of deepest harmony with each other.

So thought Yukiko's father as he complacently sipped his breakfast soup the morning after the altogether satisfactory wedding banquet. Could he have seen the young people at that moment he might have entertained some misgivings.

Minoru was sulky. He was wondering why he had ever agreed to his aunt's proposal. Here he was, with a pretty doll on his hands—yes, just another pretty doll! He snapped open an extravagant damascene case and extracted a cigarette. He would smoke until breakfast was brought in.

Yukiko looked at him doubtfully. Should she make tea? A maid had already brought in a tray of teacups with tea leaves in a pot, and had set a kettle of boiling water over the fire in the brazier. Yes, she would pour him a cup of tea—she was his wife now, and that was what a wife should do.

While she arranged the cups on the tray and lifted the cover of the little kettle, so it would "cut the steam," she kept on thinking.

Perhaps Minoru hadn't meant to be unrefined the night before. It was quite natural that he should chat and joke with the maids. He had such a friendly disposition, and she herself had been altogether too self-conscious. She ought not to have minded the maids being in such a twitter of excitement; for she had been here, a school-girl, with her father just the year before, and now she had come again—this time as a bride with her husband.

She poured some hot water into the teapot.

Of course Minoru was such a man of the world that he would take for granted their smiles and nods and their eagerness to be of service; and of course he would find amusement in chatting and joking with them.

She poured some of the tea into one of the small cups.

"Liquid jade," Mrs. Ikeda had called it one time when they were having an etiquette lesson. A wave of homesickness swept over Yukiko, but she thrust it from her at once. To be sure, Minoru was practically a stranger, and she knew almost nothing of his likes and dislikes,

but she must try to get acquainted with him. She would set herself to learn not to mind his blasé manner, his free-and-easy bantering. If only he wouldn't try to draw her into his gay familiarity with the maids!

She lifted the tray in her hands, rose to her feet, and took the two or three paces necessary to bring her to her husband's side.

Minoru, smoking, watched her musingly. How graceful she was!—and yet too dignified for a young girl. As for her coolness and reserve, he had experienced it before. Would he ever forget that uncomfortable theatre party? But Father Toyama had assured him on that occasion that her aloofness would wear off, and Minoru believed that it would. Unquestionably the Toyama fortune was worth the price of a little discomfort. Well, he could wait until she was ready to be friendly. Meanwhile he would continue jolly, hoping to melt the ice that surrounded her.

She sank down upon the matting, setting the tray beside her. She tried to say "Master," but could not make the word come; however, her bow conveyed the meaning. With her two slender hands she lifted the cup and presented it to him.

There was a pause. Minoru looked at her intently. Then, prompted by some misguided impulse of friendliness, he abruptly grasped—not the cup, but Yukiko's wrist. Holding tightly, he waited for her to look up. She, however, only bowed her head the lower, while

Minoru smiled to see the back of her white neck becoming as red as a cherry.

Then there was the sound of approaching footsteps. Minoru released her wrist. Yukiko returned the cup to the tray. Both assumed natural positions.

The breakfast trays were brought in, and the proprietress of the inn came also, as she wished to be quite sure that everything was to the liking of this important young couple. Just inside the door she seated herself and bowed her forehead to the floor.

"It's a splendid day!" she said with a sibilant intake of breath as a prelude—"a day of real 'little spring.' And your honourable father—how gracious of him to favour us with your honeymoon! I fear this is quite too insignificant a place for you, Honourable Both. Indeed, as I look at you I might almost think I am resting my eyes upon the Lord and Lady dolls of the March Festival."

As she raised her head to gaze admiringly upon the handsome young couple she caught a glint of annoyance on the groom's face. Why, she didn't know; for she had offered only the customary politeness. She must make amends; so she hastened to set forth a plan for their entertainment.

"Since it is such a balmy day," said she, "how about a ramble on the hills, with a bonfire of fallen leaves and a picnic lunch? As for the shrines, you can see them another day."

"Splendid idea!" Minoru agreed readily. "If we should

start out to see the shrines we would never get through. Anyway, both of us have already seen them. By all means—a picnic!”

He turned to his breakfast with an awakened relish.

“Have there been many schools visiting Nikko this autumn?” inquired Yukiko. Not that she wanted especially to know, but it would be pleasant if the proprietress would stay and talk with them. Then she and Minoru need not be under such a strain, trying to think of something to say to each other. This matter of getting acquainted was not easy for either of them.

“Yes,” the proprietress said. “There have been rather more schools than usual, this fall; and not only schools, but other groups of people. We had a visiting baseball team from America. To be sure, they stayed at another hotel, but I saw them on the street. There was no mistaking them—such tall fellows as they were! But our place was honoured by a visit from Baiko and Uzaemon and seven or eight other actors from the Kabuki and Imperial theatres. They came for a brief rest at the month-end holiday, when the programmes were changing.”

“Have you ever seen any of the great actors perform?” asked Yukiko.

“Yes,” replied the woman. “Once, when I went up to Tokyo, I saw Baiko give his wonderful performance of the Aunt, in *The Devil's Arm*. And I do hope he will soon recover from his illness. The dearest hope of my life is to see Baiko act again.”

She put her hands on the floor before her and made a slight bow.

"And now, if you will excuse me," this talkative woman went on, "I will tell the maids to prepare a picnic lunch. We will wait your pleasure at the entrance," she added as she bowed again at the door.

"How much she knows about sports and amusements!" remarked Yukiko, as she poured tea into her empty rice bowl and stirred it slowly round and round with her chopsticks.

"Huh! She would—in a place like this," answered Minoru, with a scornful little laugh.

He pushed himself, still on his cushion, back from the table, and comfortably crossing his legs before him, took out a cigarette and lighted it.

Yukiko clapped her hands three times, and when a maid appeared, she asked her to bring the morning paper and then remove the breakfast things.

While Minoru looked over the paper she busied herself about a few little things, and after the maid had left the room she put on her haori. Minoru finished his cigarette, tossed aside the paper, and, rising, reached for his hat from the deep woven bamboo tray near the door—the catchall for hats and wraps. Yukiko, with a quick "Excuse me!" hastily stooped for his cane, and handed it to him, as a wife should.

The proprietress led them a short distance along the main street, bordered with its enticing curio shops; then a

turn to the left and a few steps down a narrow lane brought them to a vegetable field—a long strip of land between the village and the hills. A quaint foot bridge made of two halves of a tree trunk carried them across a slender stream. Then a winding path led up the hill.

The proprietress continued her merry chatter, stopping her guests occasionally to point out to them choice bits of scenery.

“Honourable Sir, see that curving strip of red?” she called out from behind them. “That is the famous Red Lacquer Bridge, sacred to the exclusive use of His Majesty. Do you remember reading in your primary school readers about General Grant’s being invited to cross the bridge? And how he refused, saying that he was only a common man? Well, that is all true. My father was the hotel keeper in those days, and many’s the time I’ve heard him tell about it.”

“He’s a very great hero in the United States,” volunteered Minoru. “I saw his tomb in New York.”

“Modesty is truly becoming to the great!” she answered.

One more turn, one more bit of steep climbing, and they found themselves on the levelled top of the hill. On the far horizon a range of blue-gray mountains was almost concealed by nearer, clearer hills, between two of which was a wide, rocky valley with an autumn-dry stream wandering through it. And directly below lay a long line of mouse-gray roofs, merging at the right into a brown road bordered by giant cryptomeria trees marching on and on toward

Tokyo. To the left loomed the low, round mountain chosen for the enshrinement of Ieyasu Tokugawa, Japan's greatest shogun. The bright green of the weathered-copper roofs of the shrine gleamed like jade shields against the sombre cryptomerias, the giant sentinels eternally on guard.

Yukiko could scarcely take her eyes from the loveliness of the scene; but Minoru soon turned his attention to the merrily crackling fire.

The two maids had hung a kettle from an improvised pot hook and were busily gathering twigs and leaves to make a blaze. The five-story red lacquer lunch box they had brought stood on one of the rustic benches. The proprietress lifted off section after section filled with delicious-looking dainties. By the time they were served on small lacquer plates, the kettle was boiling.

"Please come, Young Madam!" called the proprietress, making a shadow bow toward Yukiko, while she skilfully poured water into the teapot from the hanging kettle. "There's nothing here but common food, but please come!"

Yukiko had been slowly turning around, gazing in all directions, her eyes shining with a calm and peaceful light.

"Yes, come!" she said to Minoru. "More than anything I adore being out of doors—and getting hungry—and *eating* out of doors!"

The proprietress had been bustling around directing the maids, but now she placed herself a short distance from

the table and again took up her duty of starting the conversational ball to rolling.

"I suppose you have been exceedingly busy," she began. "Your wedding must have been a very grand affair. How I should like to have seen your wonderful trousseau. I wish you would tell all about it."

So while they ate they talked, and as they talked the events of the past days took their places as part of the pattern in Yukiko's life. The past was past, and whereas for her there had been many possibilities before, now there was but one, to be to Minoru the kind of wife her father wished her to be. It seemed a simple task, there on the hill-top.

At last the maids were clearing away and packing up the things and starting back with them to the hotel.

"From the peak behind us, there is a very wonderful view, if you care to make the climb," said the proprietress, looking from one to the other questioningly.

"Indeed, I should be delighted!" exclaimed Yukiko, springing to her feet happily.

"You two go, while I stay here and smoke," said Minoru.

Yukiko looked at him hesitatingly an instant, then said pleasantly, "If you will excuse us, we will."

Stepping lightly along the path, refreshed by the informality of their outing and the beauties of Nature, Yukiko was almost happy. She was grateful to her father

for sending them here. She wondered what he was doing that very minute. She hoped he was not tired out from the wedding and all the countless things he had been doing for her. She pictured him sitting beside his low, broad table, his hand resting lightly on the edge of the bronze brazier, and she herself sitting opposite him, as she so often had done. From beneath his bushy brows his keen eyes were looking out upon her, their keenness softened with tenderness. His lips moved as if he were about to speak.

Yukiko stopped suddenly in the path, hearing again her father's last words as he said good-bye to her. "Daughter, when a woman is married, her husband is all her world. To remember this is her happiness."

She paused a moment in deep thought. Perhaps to leave Minoru all alone was not the thing to do. She turned back to meet the proprietress, whose middle-aged bulk made her puff along rather slowly coming up the steep places.

"I believe the view from here satisfies me," said Yukiko, "and, if you don't mind, I would like to return."

"Well, well! I had forgotten it was such a stiff climb," panted the proprietress, quite agreeable to the suggestion.

On the way down, as they brushed past a scarlet maple, Yukiko put out her hand and broke off a small branch of the gay foliage. She would present it to her husband as a token of her thought of him while she was away. She smiled a little to herself at having the thought; for somehow she always found it impossible either to give or to

receive an expression of feeling gaily and simply. Out of the loneliness of her childhood, gestures and tones and glances which passed casually with others had a way with her of assuming greater importance and deeper meanings. With a little flush on her cheeks, she hoped Minoru would understand her hidden message when she presented the gay little branch to him.

She saw him from a distance. He was standing beside the fire, and from his hands hung the long loops of a scroll letter.

"Perhaps a maid has just brought some mail," she thought. "Can it be from home?"

She quickened her step, her sandalled feet crushing the dry leaves crisply.

So absorbed was Minoru that he was not aware of Yukiko's presence until she stood a few feet from him on the opposite side of the fire.

"We're back again," she called gaily, waving the branch to him.

He looked up, startled. The letter dropped from his hand. The end of it fell over the burning leaves.

"Your letter!" exclaimed Yukiko, dismayed, and starting to reach out for it.

"Oh, I've finished reading it!" He scuffed the rest of it into the fire, but casual though he tried to be, he was evidently annoyed. "It's nothing important," he said hurriedly, "only a letter from a fellow I knew when I was a teacher. Saa! Let's go back to the hotel."

He took up his cane and started down the path, leaving Yukiko to follow.

It was necessary for Yukiko to circle the fire in order to reach the path; and as she did so she unconsciously glanced down at the charred remains of the letter. Sticking out sharply was the corner of a photograph—a snapshot. At that moment it caught fire and, burning, curled over so that Yukiko could see it clearly. It was Minoru and—who was that other? Where had she seen her? “When I was a teacher,” he had said; but this was no “fellow”: it was a girl. And why were they sitting together so familiarly? Oh——

Yukiko was frightened. The branch of gay foliage slipped from her fingers and fell upon the picture just as it flared up in a snappy crackle of flame. Something clutched tightly at Yukiko’s heart. She choked back a sob and ran stumbling down the hill after Minoru, her husband.

CHAPTER XII

KOTO AND SAMISEN

MY HUMBLE family realizes, Young Madam," a low, troubled voice was saying, "that we must seem very ungrateful to ask you to let Miyo leave your service so suddenly. She has been most fortunate to be under the shadow of your gracious sleeve these several years."

Baya, the mother of Yukiko's maid Miyo, sat on the porch just outside the shoji of Yukiko's room and with respectful bows punctuated her sentences generously.

"Baya, you are very welcome," Yukiko replied gently. "I am glad you have come to see me about this. But you must not sit so formally outside the sill. Please come nearer. I cannot talk with you at such a distance, and I want to hear more of your plan for Miyo."

At this urgent invitation the woman, still on her knees, modestly drew herself into the room and took a place not far from Yukiko.

A cup of tea was set before her, which she lifted to the level of her forehead with another bow.

"Miyo has already told me the circumstances that make her feel obliged to leave me," said Yukiko—at which Baya looked up quickly—"and I understand how hard it has

been for you, with your husband's accident and his long sickness, and your only son away in the army, too."

The woman sighed a little. Yukiko thought it was a sigh of appreciation for sympathy; but in truth Baya was relieved that the Young Madam seemed not to know that Miyo's reason for leaving the Toyama mansion was to escape the attentions of the young master.

"I shall miss Miyo greatly," Yukiko went on, "but I hope that she will find it possible to come here sometimes for music practice. See! That is our new instrument."

She pointed to a samisen hanging on the side wall of the tokonoma.

"It was purchased for Miyo to accompany me when I play on the koto," she added. "I suppose we will not have many more chances to use it, and I am sorry, but fate is not changed by brooding."

Yukiko tried to speak lightly, lest her own sorrow at losing Miyo should cause Baya too great distress as being the author of it. For the last six years Miyo had been Yukiko's personal maid, having been called to the Toyamas' because of her skill in playing the samisen. Indeed, her position was that of companion rather than servant.

"How does it happen, Baya, that your daughter is so very well trained in samisen playing?" asked Yukiko. "Our music teacher often speaks of it."

Baya smoothed the skirt of her modest kimono—her best one, in which she had dressed herself for this momentous visit.

"It was this way, Young Madam. With only one son and one daughter we were able to do better with their education than we could have done had there been more children. Now, my husband is rather queer in some of his ideas, and he feels that even a girl should have some way of earning a living; so when she is married, if trouble strikes the home, she will be able to help her husband until he can stand again. And then, though my husband is only a carpenter, yet he has a great fondness for music. There's no evening but he plays on his bamboo flute—with his leg fastened to a stick, and all."

Yukiko quietly refilled the teacup of the old woman, at the same time nodding her head interestedly to encourage her to continue talking.

"Yes, he likes music," Baya went on, "and he said that Miyo should learn to play the samisen. She began when she was in the primary school."

"And now she is able to be a teacher of the samisen!" said Yukiko. "I think you must be very proud of her."

"Ha-a-!" falteringly assented the old woman, simpering modestly. "My husband always says that to put finishing breeding into a child is better than to put money into the Post Office Savings; for, as the saying goes, 'A robber can steal money, but no one can steal manners or what you've learned.' And then too—" she looked up gratefully—"the gods have been kind in placing Miyo's fate in your grand home, where she has learned many things."

She looked slowly around the room.

"Miyo tells me that your mansion was always beautiful," she said, "but that it is even more beautiful now, since the congratulating occasion of a few months back. Your honourable father has wonderful taste, so the world says!"

"And so has my mother," added Yukiko.

She always tried to give her mother credit whenever possible. Her sense of loyalty demanded it the more because of her inability to love her mother as she felt a mother should be loved.

They sat a few minutes in confidential silence, while the old woman enjoyed another cup of tea. It was a rare treat for Baya to be received on such terms of equality by the employer of her daughter. As she sat sipping her tea, she thought to herself, "Now, if it had been Madam Toyama, instead of Young Madam, who received me, things would have been very different." She had heard that Madam observed social rank very strictly.

Through the glass panels of the porch, Yukiko could see out into the garden. A light snow was dusted over the neatly cropped grass and clung in tufts here and there to the artistic pile of rocks which made a support for the gnarled old plum tree. This tree was almost like a human friend to Yukiko. It had stood there outside her window ever since she could remember. This winter, particularly, she had enjoyed its mute companionship. So old it was that she had wondered if it would ever bloom again, and her heart had given a throb of joy when, on the last day of December, she discovered a touch of waxy white peep-

ing from the buds; and now, cold February though it was, the old scraggly tree wore a garment of snowy blossoms.

The words of an old poem drifted into her mind:

*The plum blossoms,
Which I thought to show
To my brother,
Seem not to be plum at all—
But only fallen snow!*

There are many Japanese poems connecting plum blossoms with snow, so perhaps the reason the plum was Yukiko's favourite flower was because of its poetic connection with her name "Yuki—snow."

"Do you know, Baya," asked Yukiko suddenly, "that your husband is very devoted to this plum tree? When he is working about the place he often comes and sits by the rocks to smoke his pipe and gaze at the tree."

"Do I know it, Young Madam!" exclaimed Baya with a laugh. "If you could only hear him talk and talk about the wonderful 'Toyama dragon' with its twisted body, and scales, and rocks to rest on! He will have it that your plum tree is a bewitched dragon."

"Father says if Goro were not such a wonderfully fine carpenter he would like to make him his gardener."

"Your honourable father has given so much into my husband's hand that he feels almost a sense of possession of some parts of this house. Many a time have his friends

teased him and said, 'You talk as if you owned the Toyama mansion.' Truly he——"

She paused, startled by the soft chime of a clock in the next room.

"Maa! Maa! How I talk—and talk—and talk!" she chattered. "And I ought to be going home this very minute!"

She leaned over, and, talking all the time, she wrapped up the cakes left on her plate in the folded white paper under them and tucked them neatly in her sleeve, to take home with her.

"See how long the shadows are! Maa! The hurrying feet of a winter's day are marvellously swift! I will take my leave now."

Baya bowed and slipped backward across the smooth mats to the door, where she bowed again with her forehead to the floor. Then, rising to her feet, she started along the porch, but hearing Yukiko's voice she turned around.

Yukiko was standing in the door.

"Baya," she said, "tell Goro, please, that Father is waiting for him to get well so he can build the Ceremonial Tea House for Mother. Father wants Goro to do it. He declares he will have no one else."

Baya bowed a willing assent and went pattering along the porch with a satisfied and happy heart.

That evening was Miyo's last in the Toyama mansion, and it was with a heavy heart that she placed the koto before her beloved mistress and took down from the wall

the new samisen. They played duets and solos, all their favourite tunes, and even the ballads they so often had sung together.

"We must have them all," Yukiko had said, "for we may never have another evening like this."

Miyo laughed back her tears.

"Oh, Young Madam," she declared earnestly, "I shall come again soon—I shall be a constant annoyance, like a stone in the middle of the gate. I shall come as often as possible."

"Listen!"

Yukiko held up her hand. Her ivory-tipped thumb and fingers looked like knights bearing aloft shining shields.

From far away came the sing-song call of the noodle vendor:

"Hot—pot-cooked—noodles! Hot—pot-cooked—noodles!" and they knew it was after midnight.

"I suppose all the night shops along the sidewalks are closing now, and the shopkeepers are enjoying a bowl of hot noodles from the old man's pushcart," said Miyo.

"There's lonesomeness in the noodle call," said Yukiko, with a little shiver. "But I like the sound of the night watchman's clappers. There!—hear it? There's safety in that sound."

"Clack! Clack! Clack-clack!" The blocks of hard wood resounded in the stillness as the watchman clapped them together in his strong hands.

"Miyo!" suddenly exclaimed Yukiko. "I have a nice

thought! I am going to set aside this special one of the evening sounds and call it yours. Whenever I hear it I shall think of you."

"Oh, Young Madam!" cried Miyo, with a little catch in her throat. "I wish—I wish that I could be such a protector for you as the watchman with the blocks, to shield you from every kind of harm!"

With the corner of her sleeve she blotted a tear from each eye; then she took up her samisen and began to sing:

*"I would I were the tall bamboo!
I'd give my life to serving you.
My lower stalk a deep-toned flute,
My heart a treble fife;
These two would sing my love for you
Throughout your radiant life.
But, let my topmost tip become
The stem of your exalted brush divine,
That I—in your embrace—may write
Brave, glorious thoughts of yours and mine!"*

"Why, Miyo, I've never heard you sing that before. Where did you learn it?"

"It's one of the popular love songs. A neighbouring girl who will be one of my samisen pupils was singing it. She is a waitress in a tea house."

"I wonder if you will really find enough pupils to bring you in a good living."

"Mother is quite certain I will. The samisen is very popular just now, and in our neighbourhood many of the girls are waitresses in cafés and tea houses. They have some leisure, as well as a little extra spending money, and most of them think if they can play the samisen they can get better positions."

"I do hope for you the very best of success."

Yukiko's voice was sympathetic, yet she couldn't help a strain of wistfulness as she added, "I suppose some of those waitresses must be very attractive. My husband says they are 'healers of the tired brain.' I think he knows the cafés and tea houses rather well."

Miyo looked up and, meeting her mistress's eye, nodded in comprehending sympathy.

Yukiko suddenly felt that she must in some measure defend her husband.

"Father is gradually turning over to him his place as director in many firms," she added quickly, "and they have their dinners together somewhere, followed by the business meetings."

"Maa! It must be an important business that keeps the Young Master out as late as this!"

Yukiko felt the sarcastic implication in the words, but she did not reprove her.

"I sometimes think the fault is mine," she said quietly, "and I regret that I am what I am. I must appear uninteresting to a man like your young Master. Now, if I were somewhat different——"

She finished with a sigh.

They sat in silence for a time, each engrossed with her own thoughts. Presently Miyo's fingers began aimlessly to pluck some little shreds of melody from the strings of her instrument. Yukiko found herself leaning over her koto following Miyo's lead. A few measures, and they swung into their favourite duet. They were still playing when they heard the familiar "Honk! Honk!" of Minoru's car.

"He has returned. You must go, Miyo."

"Yes, Young Madam. Good-night and—Sayonara!—if it must be!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE COVETED CROWN

YES, Father." Yukiko spoke calmly, although she was restlessly tying and untying the cord of her haori while she talked. "Yes, the business in Shizuoka cannot be finished as quickly as Minoru thought, so he will be detained a few days longer."

"Humh! I thought as much!"

Yukiko had more to say, but she was stayed for an instant by the look—half troubled, half disgusted—that wrinkled her father's brow and drew down the corners of his mouth.

"Also, Father," she presently went on, "he wished me to remind you—I don't know what it is, but he said you would know—to give your attention to the matter he has mentioned several times lately. What is it, Father? Will you tell me?"

"Tell you? I thought you knew! His request is always the same—money. Money for this, money for that. Money—money—money!"

Mr. Toyama shook the words out wrathfully. Yukiko had never seen him so upset. She looked in astonishment at his flushed, angry face.

"Father!" she exclaimed. "You know what the doctor said about your not becoming excited."

Her father, however, thought that she was pained at his outburst against her husband; so he let his anger pass, and when he spoke again his voice was quiet and almost casual.

"Well, I dare say there is nothing to worry about. He is still young, and I suppose we must give him a chance to learn. Besides, he is your husband and my heir. All I have will be his in due time."

"In his letter," said Yukiko, "he spoke about the new electric railway company. He now feels assured that if we invest in it we shall become so rich, we will be multi-millionaires."

"Rich! Humh!" Mr. Toyama suppressed a laugh with a grunt. "The trouble with him is, he doesn't know a thousand yen from a hundred—never having had either before! One might as well pour cold water on a heated stone as to give him all the financial reinforcements he asks for! But, then, as I said before, don't you worry, Daughter. It is not a matter you need to understand."

They sat in silence a few minutes. Each was thinking of Minoru, yet how far apart were their thoughts! Each felt it necessary to make excuses for him, and consequently there was a constraint that kept them both from speaking freely.

Mr. Toyama looked around his daughter's room, scrutinizing its simple furnishings as if they had never before met his eyes.

Yukiko, thinking to make him feel more at ease, pushed the tobacco box toward him. He drew his favourite long-stemmed pipe from out his sash and filled its tiny bowl with a pellet of tobacco.

"Yukiko," he said finally and with an apparent effort, "of late there has sprung up within me a new, great ambition."

"Ambition, Father?" She wondered what ambition he could have now, on the very eve of becoming a retired gentleman.

"Yes," he said, touching the bowl of his pipe to a glowing coal nestled in the ash of the box, and waiting silently until it caught fire, "I have a new ambition. I suppose our ambitions differ with the different phases of our lives," he added whimsically.

"Well, Father, what is your ambition?" she asked, thinking he was making a joke.

He took three puffs at his pipe, then hesitated.

"My ambition, Daughter, is to wear a crown."

He knocked the burned ash into the tobacco box.

"To wear a crown?" Yukiko laughed gently. "Ah! You are joking!"

"Not at all. I was never more serious. There are more crowns than those worn by kings. And I long for the glory of my crown while I am still living."

"Well, Father, I do hope you will get your crown, for you really deserve one. But do tell me what you mean!"

"I would wear the crown of 'grandfather,'" he said,

and thrust his pipe into his sash. It had been hard to speak of this to his daughter, with whom he had never had any kind of intimate conversation. But now it was out. He waited for her to speak.

She looked at him a moment, not comprehending; then his meaning came to her. She bowed her head. Her face flamed scarlet, then went white as paper, and her trembling fingers tied and untied the cord of her haori, not knowing what they did.

She wanted to tell him she was entirely loyal to his plan for the continuance and advancement of their family name. She wished he could know how glad she would be to give him the crown he so much desired. She promised herself to go to the shrine and pray for some touch of heaven that would enable her to fulfil her woman's destiny to become a mother. So the tumult of thought rushed through her mind as her unknowing fingers tied and untied her haori cord.

Her father, seeing her embarrassment, half regretted having spoken, although he was very much concerned about this—not only because of his own hope, but because he felt that the coming of children would end Yukiko's loneliness and steady Minoru's irregular life. But Yukiko seemed so distressed that he dropped the subject. "Perhaps another time," he thought, and cast about in his mind for something else to talk about.

"Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, "I like the way you are becoming so gay and dressy lately! That's right,

Daughter! That's the way to please a young husband."

Yukiko looked up gratefully, and realizing that her father was trying to be jovial in order to ease her mind, she entered into his joking.

"How fond of riddles you are today, Father! What do you mean by 'gay and dressy'?"

"What should I mean but your hair? You have never arranged it in that elaborate marumage style before. Now, I like it! You look truly 'Young-Madam-like.' I might almost think you have taken a leaf from your young mother's notebook!"

"Perhaps I have, Father," Yukiko laughed. "A gay style goes with gay spirit, and I notice you like both. Of course"—her voice became earnest—"marumage has always seemed a style more suited to those who have a brighter and gayer spirit than myself"—her face coloured slightly—"but I thought maybe a gayer appearance would help me to have a gayer spirit."

"Right! Right!" said her father, well pleased with his daughter's hesitating confession. "One of the happiest possessions a woman can have is a balmy spring atmosphere in which a man can breathe. Your husband is not bad. Far from it! He will come out all right, I am sure—especially since you are becoming such a charming little butterfly for his sake!"

In his enthusiasm he poured out his bottled-up thoughts unreservedly, trying to make up for being so outspoken before. But of late, he had been questioning in his own

mind the wisdom of his choice of adopting Minoru; and he sadly felt the need of companionship in his efforts to bring this new son into successful manhood. Madam Toyama could hardly be of help in this, as she saw only perfection in her nephew. Only Yukiko could help him; and he realized that she was doing what she could and taking upon herself the blame for his falling short of the ideal they had set for him.

Thus, owing to the reservations in the mind of each, it was embarrassing for both father and daughter to discuss the situation freely.

So it was a relief when steps were heard coming along the narrow porch, and a maid's voice was heard saying, "Yes, Madam, Honourable Master is waiting for you in Young Madam's room."

The next moment Madam Toyama's maid Natsu was bowing at the door.

Yukiko smiled at the experienced maid's emphasis on the words "waiting for you." She noticed that her father straightened the broad collar of his kimono and cleared his throat once or twice. She herself reached into the closet behind her and pulled forth a purple satin zabuton, one of her very best cushions. She placed it near the tokonoma that her mother might sit in the most honourable part of the room.

Natsu stepped aside and bowed, as Madam Toyama came slowly along the porch. She hesitated effectively at the threshold of Yukiko's room, for she enjoyed being

greeted by two pair of eyes searching her face to determine what humour she was in. It gave her a sense of power.

Accompanied by the subtle fragrance of her delicate toilet, she entered languidly, and languidly sank down upon the purple zabuton, waiting impressively while Natsu bowed and withdrew.

Yukiko murmured with a bow, "You have returned, Honourable Mother."

"Maa! I have returned," replied Madam Toyama sullenly. "And how do I feel? Eh! I am weary—I was never more weary than I am this minute!"

She looked at her husband as if to draw from him some reply to the inward thought so slightly veiled by her words.

"I assure you," responded her husband, "that I appreciate your effort most heartily."

"I should hope so! Such an errand! Really, Father should have called you, instead of me! It was very inconsiderate of him, very!"

She spoke more and more rapidly, her pose of weariness, or possibly the gushing out of her staccato sentences, relieved her somewhat of her languor. Becoming conscious of a few strands of hair that had separated themselves from her perfectly arranged coiffure and were playing about her delicately tinted face, she, first with her right hand, then with her left, stroked the truant strands back into place as if rebuking them for adding even their slight weight to the burdens she bore.

Meantime Natsu had returned, bringing an oval lac-

quer tray with a tea set. She placed it unobtrusively before her young mistress, who received it with a gentle nod of acknowledgment.

Yukiko maintained a politely listening attitude, the while she set the exquisite blue cups on the little lacquer saucers and poured the tea from the small china pot. She set a cup before her father, then one before her mother.

The stream of Madam Toyama's words was flowing on.

"My father, Viscount Oku, sends his greetings and cordial compliments to our household." Her face held a sadly disapproving expression. "Husband, the Viscount has been in rather poor health of late."

"Oh?" Mr. Toyama seemed genuinely concerned. "That is news! Not good news, either. I am very sorry indeed to hear this. I certainly hope he will be better soon! What seems to be the trouble?"

"I hope he is not so ill that he must stay in bed?" Yukiko added sympathetically.

"Well, fortunately, he is so full of energy that he doesn't give in easily. Most men of his rank would have become gentlemen of leisure, but that is not his way. Even though he is a viscount and is no longer young, he has no thought of retiring."

Yukiko and her father wondered how long it would be before Madam Toyama would arrive at the subject which had brought her into their presence the very moment she entered the house after her return from Viscount Oku's. That there must be something of importance in her mind,

they were both certain. Her repressed air of excitement indicated that. Yet both of them knew that she always approached matters of importance by roundabout paths; so they waited patiently while she touched upon various preliminary topics. Finally she drew in a deep breath and looked toward her husband.

"It seems to me that in my father's mind there is a feeling of dissatisfaction with our family," she said slowly. "And a very reasonable feeling it is, too."

"I wonder, now, what it can be," Mr. Toyama remarked dryly, fingering the long stem of his silver pipe.

"Honourable Mother, you look troubled," Yukiko murmured. "Please tell us about it."

Madam Toyama looked from one to the other, held by a moment's suspicion that she had caught a note of sarcasm. Both of them, however, were looking at her with due respect.

"Yes, I should say that it is very reasonable," she repeated. "Naturally, my father is interested in Minoru's future, for Minoru is his grandson; and his father being dead, his grandfather has, more than ever, an obligation to look after his grandson's future. In his opinion you have not shown the confidence in Minoru that you profess. Here it is three years that you have called him the heir of this house—but have you treated him as your heir? My father says, 'no'!"

She pursed her lips and snapped her eyes.

Mr. Toyama mused. Should he try to explain to this

unbusinesslike wife of his the very good reasons which had kept him from turning over more power to Minoru? . Presently Yukiko spoke.

"It has also pained me to hear Minoru say repeatedly the same thing," she said. "He feels that he should be trusted more."

"Exactly! Trusted more!" Madam Toyama echoed. "Minoru is a water dragon, and how can a water dragon show its real power unless it is allowed to swim in big water? You keep Minoru swimming in too small a pond."

"You women don't understand the situation," said Mr. Toyama, as he cleared his throat, "and I'll see if I can explain. It's this way. As Yukiko is a girl, although she is the only child of the family, the minute she was married to Minoru she forfeited legally all her rights as my heir, transferring those rights to her husband." Mr. Toyama emphasized his explanation with his pipe for a pointer. "That being the case," he went on, "all that I possess will in time be Minoru's. In a word, I am merely guarding his possessions until he has acquired more business sense. That is all."

"Oh, I understand your reasons, Husband," Madam Toyama broke in. "This is the very point with which my father is dissatisfied. He says a man has *some* pride, and that Minoru does not enjoy being treated as a mere dependent. If you make his position such that he can be proud of it, then he will be aroused to prove himself efficient. He has more business sense than you give him

credit for, and here three winters and summers have gone since he became your son, yet he is just where he was then—without any actual power over his own inheritance. It's a humiliating situation for such a man as Minoru—so full of activity and ambition! Well, that is the exact opinion of Viscount Oku, his own grandfather."

Madam Toyama sighed. She was actually fatigued with the fervour of her defense of her nephew. Moreover, she was not unconscious that her fervour had the same power as the gently curving line of steam issuing from the tea-kettle in her tea-ceremony room. Let the water within begin to boil, and the steam, escaping, will lift the kettle's lid, however thick and heavy it may be. Such was the influence Madam Toyama had over her husband.

Yet he might have resisted giving in to her had it not been for Yukiko. Her troubled face and pleading eyes seemed to be begging him to make Minoru satisfied, and thus would the entire family be content.

Mr. Toyama filled his pipe and smoked while his wife and Yukiko waited for him to arrive at his decision. Finally he knocked out the pellet of ash into the brazier and spoke.

"Eh—maa!" he grunted. "I suppose it is all the same whether Minoru takes the reins now or later. He has to learn sometime, and perhaps it is as well for him to have full possession while I am still here, in case——"

He stopped abruptly, then went on in swift, decisive sentences:

"All right! I shall attend to it at once. Minoru shall have

full power. I will go now and telephone my lawyer to bring the necessary papers. He is coming here at four."

The two women were joyful, for they knew that when Mr. Toyama gave his word the thing was as good as done. Yet their joy was far apart in kind. Madam Toyama was elated over getting her own way, for it gratified her to feel that her influence over her husband was so powerful. As for Yukiko, her joy was not unmixed with sorrow; for her father, who had always seemed to her like a rock, had yielded to the importunings of these two whom he loved—even though he very evidently did not wish to do so.

Yukiko wondered if her father really disapproved of turning everything over to Minoru, or if his hesitation was because, with responsibilities gone, he must settle down into being an old man.

"Husband!" Madam Toyama's thin lips smiled ingratiatingly. "I wonder if you will have a few minutes to spare after you have telephoned."

"Why, yes. What do you want of me, Teruko?"

"It is only that I have brought from my father's triple kakemono. As you know, he has an unusually fine collection of paintings of the old masters. As he has so many he has decided to part with some of them. Now, this set is the work of Kano, and Father would like you to give your opinion of it."

Mr. Toyama knew from former experience that "giving his opinion" of the kakemono meant buying it at a good sum, which Viscount Oku was evidently in need of to help

him over some financial trouble. "However," thought Mr. Toyama whimsically, "as I've decided to hand over everything to my wife's nephew, I may as well help out my wife's father."

As her parents left the room, tears came to Yukiko's eyes, and she covered her bowed face with her sleeves.

"Oh," she murmured, "Father is indeed growing old. All his crisp sternness is turning to pliant thoughtfulness. Whatever I ask him, he does for me. Oh, if I could only do for him what he wishes!"

That night Yukiko had a dream. She was in a strange land, hurrying along a crowded street where she was jostled by Chinese merchants and coolies. The air was warm and filled with the odour of tropical blossoms. "Formosa!" she whispered, noticing the Japanese officials in uniform. One of these uniformed men she felt impelled to follow—some irresistible power drew her after him. The same irresistible force caused him finally to turn. Ah—Masao! A look passed from his eyes to hers—a look mystic in its meaning—longing, but strong in resistance.

Suddenly she was wide awake, her body tingling to her very fingertips—her heart pounding within her like the thunder of ocean waves beating against huge rocks.

The next moment she sprang up in her cushions, her hands pressed to her hot cheeks—her head bowed in shame.

"Oh!" she whispered hoarsely, "I am to blame! I am to blame! I did not put away from me the memory of my

girlhood friend. I am not, in the eyes of heaven, a faithful wife. Perhaps—perhaps, in giving to Masao the simple devotion of a girlish heart, I have unknowingly given away that which I owe only to Minoru. Oh, can it be that because of that spiritual lack in my relations with Minoru I am unable to fulfil my woman's destiny?

“I must go again to the shrine. I must pray and pray for some call of the spirit to Minoru—some spark of affinity that will give me power to become a mother and so bring to my father the coveted crown.”

CHAPTER XIV

AT THE SAGE'S FAN

HARVEST DAY" is what the lucky income days were called at the tea house of the Sage's Fan.

There had not been many "harvest days" of late, owing to the increasing popularity of entertaining in Western style. Especially since the Great Earthquake, it had become more and more fashionable to hold banquets and conferences and receptions in foreign hotels and restaurants, of which Tokyo boasts all grades to suit all purses. Indeed, it had become not only a question of fashion, but a matter of finance; for, besides sounding more modern, it demanded a smaller purse to entertain in Western style.

Only a few days before, the Mistress of the Sage's Fan had been shaking her head over her account books and wondering how much longer her establishment could withstand the competition.

"It's all come about," she murmured, "because these modern business men are dressing themselves up in coats and trousers, and then of course they want chairs to sit on. It's a shame to give up our own customs, that it is!"

She turned to the maid who had just entered.

"Well, what is it?" she demanded briskly.

"O Kami San, a caller is here. Viscount Oku has sent his steward to discuss a matter of business with you."

At the name "Viscount Oku" the Mistress looked up quickly. In former days Viscount Oku had been one of her best patrons. Lately, however, his visits had become less and less frequent; and now it had been fully six months since she had seen him.

There had been rumours, she reflected, indicating that cloudy days had come upon him. But here he was again! Perhaps his sky was brightening. Even so, she must be cautious. His patronage was good for the reputation of her place, but, nevertheless, in these hard times one must look to the financial standing of one's patrons.

These thoughts passed through her mind as she went to the small conference room to meet the steward. There she learned that Viscount Oku had become president of the newly organized O. and T. Kinematograph Company with a capital of a million yen, and the company had allowed a generous amount to pay for the organization celebration. An hour later she was planning for the most elaborate banquet her establishment had known in several years.

The Mistress of the Sage's Fan was much gratified that Viscount Oku had chosen her establishment. He evidently appreciated the meticulous care with which she chose her geisha for the entertaining of her guests, and he was well aware from many past experiences that every person he invited would go home feeling satisfied and happy with his host and with the entertainment of the evening.

One morning, about two weeks later, the Mistress was awakened by the "buzz-z" of the tiny alarm clock which she had placed in the hollow of her wooden pillow.

"Maa! It's almost dawn!" she exclaimed. "I must hurry the maids up at once. This is to be a 'golden harvest day' for the Sage's Fan."

And indeed they had to be at work early; for every inch of the straw mats which closely covered every floor must be carefully wiped, every bit of woodwork and the ornamental posts must be rubbed with steaming cloths, and the narrow porch floors polished until they gleamed like shining lacquer.

"Maa! How well you are working!" exclaimed the Mistress, time and again urging the girls by her praise to even greater endeavours. "It is your elbow oil that will make the house look fresh and inviting. I appreciate your putting it so generously upon the woodwork, I do indeed."

All day the kitchen hummed with steady activity. Three trays must be made ready for each of the one hundred and fifty guests. But as only the three kinds of soup, the fish, the chicken custard, and the rice at the end of the feast need be served hot, the other food could be prepared in individual dishes and placed upon the trays early in the afternoon.

The Mistress came and looked critically at the red snappers to see if they were being toasted properly, and that the sprinkled salt had hardened into wee crusted lumps deliciously brown and fragrant. She nodded ap-

provingly when she saw that each fish's tail curled up with exactly the right artistic curve, and the fresh, thin slices of pink-and-green ginger were correctly placed along the front of each plate. Then, with a word of praise to the kitchen, she hurried away to scatter smiles in other directions. She knew how to make her servants content. She always kept them long.

The hours, this day, sped like a flying arrow, and by the time the honk of a motor car announced the arrival of the first guests, all was in readiness.

The Mistress, glancing out, saw that the doormen were standing at their posts just outside the wide entrance hall—men in dark-blue coolie coats with the large crest of the tea house in white on their backs, and white ideographs on their lapels. As jinrikisha or automobile slowed down at the door, they bowed, crying out in unison, "Honourable welcome!" while one of their number stepped forward to help the guest alight. The shoes and wooden clogs were placed side by side with others in a long row upon one of the narrow shelves against the wall, and to each was attached a slip of paper bearing the owner's name. Never once did these experienced doormen ask the name of a guest. If it was unknown they must find out through one or another of the waiting-maids. By such subtle flattery the tea house of the Sage's Fan made each patron feel well known and important.

The guests, stepping from their out-of-door footwear up into the hall, were again welcomed—this time by a bevy

of maids in gay kimonos, who knelt on the mats, bowing and smiling. Then the Mistress herself appeared, and with lively chatter conducted group after group to the spacious banquet hall.

Even when all the guests had assembled, the room was not crowded. Some of the more courteous gentlemen advanced at once to the tokonoma, and seating themselves respectfully before it, admired the arrangement of chrysanthemums and pine in the boat-shaped vase. Some gathered in groups and stood about informally on the glass-enclosed veranda, smoking and chatting, or looking out over the gray roofs and twinkling lights of the city below.

The newly fledged heir, young Toyama, was one of these. He was speaking earnestly to a dignified elderly gentleman with a gray moustache.

"There can be no question," said Minoru, "about the location we have chosen. It couldn't be better. Besides being easy of access, we have a wonderful advantage in the parking space in the basement."

"It does seem a remarkably good idea," replied the gray-moustached gentleman. "The scramble and congestion after the performance in these days is tremendous. It will indeed be comfortable, when one goes to *our* theatre, to be able to drop to the basement in an elevator, then step into one's car and be driven out an exit half-a-block away."

As the Mistress of the Sage's Fan approached, Minoru

complimented her on the excellent arrangements she had made for the evening's banquet, adding that his friend, the gentleman with the gray moustache, as well as some others of the guests, were enjoying the Sage's Fan for the first time.

"You have wrought a very home-like atmosphere," said the moustached gentleman with dignity, for, not being familiar with the gay life of Minoru's world, he was rather at a loss what to say.

The Mistress laughed companionably.

"It's only that all of you are dressed in comfortable Japanese kimonos, instead of the stiff, tight Western clothes. It makes all the difference in the world."

"Ah! It is far more than that," the gentleman responded, "far more! It is your modest, courteous maids, and"—in an unaccustomed attempt at gallantry—"your charming self, Madam."

Some of those standing near were somewhat amused at the efforts of the dignified gentleman as he began to unbend and enjoy himself under the skilful amiability of the Mistress; but Minoru was very much pleased, for this man had been difficult to win over to the Kinematograph proposition, and Minoru still felt somewhat uncertain about him, although he had already bought a sizable block of the company's stock.

Therefore young Toyama was as anxious as the Mistress that this banquet should be socially successful, for not only was it the inauguration of the O. and T. Kine-

matograph Company, of which he was the promoter, but it also was the first of several related companies which he hoped to launch. He was ambitious; and with his father-in-law's millions to use, what was to hinder him from becoming a second Mitsui? or the Henry Ford of Japan? What if he *did* lack experience, as Father Toyama had suggested? Surely, to a man with his clever mind, experience was not the only essential to success!

"Excuse me," he said, "I must have a word with Baron Nishiki."

He started in the Baron's direction. Immediately a couple of geisha girls fluttered to his side like two gay butterflies alighting in the vicinity of a choice flower.

"Toyama Sama!" exclaimed one. "You haven't been here for a long time."

"Don't you like your little girl friends any more?" chimed in the second.

Minoru smiled from one to the other.

"You can't expect a man of big business to have time to play. Besides, I've been away."

"He's been away," echoed the first, possessing herself of his hand, "been away to Osaka."

"Did you find a pretty girl there?" asked the second. "As pretty as I?"

"Don't listen to her!" interrupted the first geisha, pretending a playful disdain. "Don't listen to her! She spends time before her mirror that she ought to spend in reading news to talk about."

Then, turning to the other geisha, she pretended to whisper.

"He went to Osaka on Big Business. But now he's back in Tokyo, and of course he'll come to play with us."

She turned again to Minoru.

"When your Big Business makes you all tired out, I know a song that will rest you."

She hummed a few notes.

Minoru stopped her, withdrew his hand from hers and laid it on her shoulder with a friendly pressure.

"Sing me your song some other time, Tomiko. I'll come. I promise you. But now, tonight, you two gay little charm-ers must flit about here and there and make all the poor lonely gentlemen feel happy. Do that for me, and a jewel from Mikimoto shall adorn your hair the very next time I come."

When the Mistress judged that the time was ripe, a nod of her head to a maid standing unobtrusively by the door set in motion the smooth service of the place.

Without confusion, seat cushions were arranged on three sides of the room—an open rectangle, from the centre of which the maids could serve with ease. These quiet maids received from unseen hands at the top of the kitchen stairs small square tables of black-and-gold lacquer which they placed in order before the cushions.

The gentlemen were quietly escorted to their places, Viscount Oku, as president of the new company, being

accorded the seat of honour in front of the tokonoma. The others were seated on either hand, according to their rank. Minoru, in spite of calls to "Come up higher!" chose to take the seat at the lower left-hand end.

The Mistress looked critically over the room. The food was beautifully arranged, each table having its own china saké bottle, and cup which was kept well filled by the lively, attractive geisha girls, one to every four or five guests, and the maids guided in their serving by the nod of a head or the gesture of a hand.

The Mistress was satisfied. Now she could withdraw for a few moments. Yes, she was tired, but ten minutes in her own room would suffice to remove all traces of weariness from her face. Although some of her patrons might by calculation know that she was approaching fifty, it was her pride to appear as young as thirty-five; and so skilful was she in her make-up that even to a scrutinizing eye her beauty had the appearance of Nature's gift. Among the maids it was whispered that she had once been a famous geisha, whose freedom had been bought by a rich admirer who had subsequently died and left her the money with which she had established this tea house of the Sage's Fan. When the rumour was brought to the Mistress for verification, she had merely smiled. Her antecedents as well as her age were her own affair. "Without beginning and without end," they said of her, which was supposed to mean "Ever attractive twenty-five!"

After her short rest she returned to the banquet room and seated herself where she might observe without herself being observed. This was, for her, a time of study and analysis, a time of estimating these guests of hers and calculating the advantages of cultivating their further patronage.

The second and third tables had been brought in, black-and-gold lacquer matching the larger one, and placed on either side. The heated saké was flowing freely. The tiny cups looked still more tiny, held out in large masculine hands, to be refilled from a porcelain bottle clasped by the two slender hands of a geisha.

"Just a little more," a silvery voice would coax over every empty cup.

Little by little the hot liquor, racing through veins, melted away grown-up reserve and stiffness of manner; and the company of educated and cultured gentlemen became a gay crowd of unrestrained children—without the innocence of childhood. Light banter was interspersed with jokes which were sometimes frankly coarse. Even the decorous gentleman of the gray moustache unbent so far as to give a familiar slap on Baron Nishiki's shoulder and confide to him in a loud undertone that "wives were all right in their own place, but what would a man do with a wife in a place like this?"

Then there were music and dancing. Five of the geisha who were expert in the old classic dance took their places at the open end of the room. Posturing, beckoning, trip-

ping, bending, and swaying lightly, a clap of the hands, a tap of the foot, reaching above the head for a spray of blossoms, plucking it and bestowing it on an imaginary companion; so they performed the Maple Odori, a dance of the Autumn Festival, to the accompaniment of the voices and instruments of the samisen orchestra.

Minoru, sitting near the samisen players, gave a start of surprise. The leader of the little orchestra was none other than Miyo. He stared at her owlishly. What was Miyo, his wife's maid, doing here? He drew the back of his hand across his eyes with a puzzled gesture. Then he remembered that just before his trip to Osaka he had missed her, and Yukiko had told him that Miyo had given up service for samisen teaching.

When she laid down her instrument at the end of the dance, Minoru leaned far forward and spoke under cover of the noisy applause.

"Miyo!"

She turned toward him as if reluctantly.

"Ah! Toyama Sama!" she exclaimed, bowing low. "Excuse me for not speaking to you before."

"Miyo, I want to see you and talk with you. About Oku Sama," he added, as she made no answer. "I want to ask you what you think about the Young Madam."

"Is the Young Madam ill?"

"No, no. She is not ill, but I want to talk with you."

"So! I understand! But, Toyama Sama, I am not free

to talk with you tonight. I am here to play the samisen with my pupils."

"Well—afterward then. I will wait to see you afterward."

Miyo wondered if perhaps it would be more loyal to her dear Young Madam for her to talk with Minoru and thus keep him away from the eager, tip-seeking geisha; but she was not one to make sudden decisions, and as the banqueters were clamouring for another dance, she merely nodded her head and picked up her samisen.

The next moment, with ever increasing hilarity, the drinking and joking, dancing and music were going on.

It was long past midnight when the revelry began to subside. The maids and geisha, exhausted but still cheerful, accompanied the guests to the entrance, tactfully assisting some overjoyous, reeling ones to where the doormen could help them into their waiting vehicles.

The Mistress stood quietly by as her noisy patrons were gradually absorbed into the quietness of the deserted street. Then she turned away with a sigh.

"O Kami San!"

Minoru Toyama stood at her elbow.

"How well he carries his liquor," she thought, noticing how steadily he was standing. But aloud she asked, "What is it? What would you like?"

"A small quiet room, please, the one at the far end of the garden, if it is not in use. I wish to have a talk with Miyo, if you will kindly send her to me."

"O Miyo San? She has gone home. She is not one of our regular geisha, you know. She is a teacher of samisen."

Minoru hesitated a moment.

"Well, then send Tomiko to me."

CHAPTER XV

THE SOUND OF THE TEMPLE BELL

THE Abbot leaned against his low camphorwood desk. Thoughtfully he looked out into the small garden to which the whole side of his room was open.

He had just come in from pruning and tying up his yellow and white chrysanthemums. Naturally he liked to see beautiful flowers, but his pleasure was not unmixed with a feeling of duty; for as a priest it was part of the system of his life to produce perfect plants and blossoms as an offering to Buddha and to the spirits of those who have entered Paradise.

On the desk before him lay a large half-open book. With a slow movement he pushed over, one by one, the heavy folds of the handsome "Record of Contributions," holding the names of his parishioners and the sums they had handed him for various charities and Temple expenses.

"Honourable Abbot!" gently spoke a boy priest bowing at the door, "Mr. Toyama and his daughter are arriving. They are even now at the entrance."

"Go at once to greet them," said the Abbot, rising hastily. "Why did you not usher them in directly? Thus I gave the order."

The boy would have explained that the daughter had lingered at the gate, but his apprenticeship had just begun, so, still kneeling, he only bowed his shaven head to the floor, then stood up hurriedly to obey.

The Abbot moved toward the door. The boy priest stood aside to let him pass, then meekly followed in his wake.

Soon the guests were seated in a large plain room, on cushions placed for them by the priest before he went for the tea things.

After the season's greetings had been exchanged, the Abbot pushed forward a small teakwood tobacco set.

"Perhaps you would like to smoke?" he suggested.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Toyama, with a smile and a slight wave-off of his hand. "Honourable Abbot, I trust that our early call does not inconvenience you. I thought I would like to see you before the special service to-morrow."

"Indeed, to see you at any time is a privilege," gravely replied the Abbot. "Your continued favours are an honour to the temple as well as to our town."

He turned to Yukiko.

"The Young Madam must think this small town of Matsubara a desolate place, with nothing worthy of a glance."

"Oh, quite the contrary," Yukiko answered in her gentle voice. "To be sure, it is different from Tokyo, but I—well, somehow I feel as if I have come home. The people

are very kind, and it is beautiful wherever we go. My father makes fun of my enthusiasm, but I really love everything here."

"Well, well! Our town is to be congratulated!"

"Yes, my daughter is greatly pleased with everything in Matsubara," said Mr. Toyama. "Houses, streets, people, and particularly the small temple yards scattered through the outskirts of the town. My daughter's tastes are rather quiet," and he added slowly, "I suppose she has inherited that from her mother."

Mr. Toyama spoke the last sentence with such deep feeling that his daughter looked up quickly. For an instant their eyes met in silent sympathy.

"Young Madam," resumed the Abbot, "I have been wondering how many times the cherry blossoms have come and gone since you deserted us."

"Deserted? I? Oh, Honourable Abbot, do not use such a cruel word! Say, rather, that I was carried away into involuntary exile."

Yukiko laughed as she turned away.

"What a happy, vivacious young woman!" thought the Abbot. But Mr. Toyama felt a pang of pity, for he saw the shadow of tears in his daughter's eyes.

"Saa!" he said, going back to the Abbot's query, "it must be nearly twenty times that we have set the New Year pines at our gate since we left here. Time certainly has a speedy step."

"And so," the Abbot added, "the service tomorrow is

to commemorate the thirteenth anniversary of Madam Toyama's leaving this world."

"Yes. This is an important anniversary, and who knows if we shall be here for the next one! Four years are long. Much can happen in that time! This is the especial reason why we should like to have tomorrow's service as beautiful and inspiring as possible."

"Everything is in readiness, Mr. Toyama," the Abbot assured him gravely. "Allow me to tell you what I have planned."

As Yukiko saw that the Abbot and her father were about to engage in a discussion of details, she excused herself. She would like to wander about the temple grounds, she said.

It was a mellow autumn day. An occasional yellow leaf drifted down from a tall icho tree, settling with an almost noiseless rustle upon the carefully brushed brown earth. In pensive mood, Yukiko stepped from stone to stone along the path. Even the soft thud of her cork-soled sandals seemed out of keeping with the solemnity of the surroundings. She walked carefully lest her foot crush the moss clinging to the edge of the irregular stones.

"How perfect is each tiny frond!" she thought. "And how wonderful to attain such beauty with only a rock on which to cling."

Here was another icho tree. It had an unusually short and stubby trunk. Ah!—A sad, sweet memory floated before her mind—she, a little child, was coaxing her mother

to play "Catch as Catch Can" with her, around this very tree. Both were laughing merrily.—And now, she, a grown woman, was on her way to the grave where her mother lay silent and alone.

She was awakened from her reverie by a creaking sound.

"It must be the well wheel!" she thought. "Someone is drawing water to pour over a gravestone."

She turned in the direction of the sound. A dozen steps or so brought her to an old well, where a sturdy young woman greeted her with the simple friendliness of country people.

"The honourable sun is shining this day," she said, with a deep bow.

"You are honourably early!" responded Yukiko.

"Yes, I have been drawing water for our gravestones. Perhaps you would like some water, too?"

Without waiting for Yukiko to answer, she went on, "It would never do for a lady like you with a pretty kimono like yours to draw water. I will draw it for you."

She caught a rope in each hand and, with a see-saw motion, let the bucket down. "Skree! Skree!" creaked the wheel, and the next moment there was a splash. The woman gave a quick, sidewise jerk to the rope, and, hand over hand, her strong arms pulled *down*; thus, as the wheel creaked a deeper, slower "Skree! Skree!" the empty bucket started down and the full bucket started upward. And never for a moment had the woman's active tongue ceased its chattering.

"And you have come from the city! From Tokyo, the capital, perhaps? I've never been there, but I hope to go some day. You know we young women have to wait for our good times until our children are grown up and married and settled down."

The bucket reached the level of the curb. The woman's strong hands gripped the handle, easing the bucket to the stone; then, tipping it with swift precision, she poured the water into another bucket which stood upon the ground. Not one drop was spilled of the sparkling flood.

"But we are very lucky in this parish," continued the woman without even stopping to take breath. "Our Honourable Abbot is very good to us. He is a wonderful man, and he does so many things for us. Think, lady! He has organized a fine club for us women. It is called 'The Serving Maids of Buddha,' and we make robes for the priests, for they are Buddha's disciples. Every month each of us pays in twenty sen, and in the springtime we all gather in the Presence at the holy altar and draw lots to see who is chosen by Buddha to go on a pilgrimage."

She stopped for one impressive instant.

"And what do you think, Honourable Lady? I—yes, I—was one of those who drew a lucky lot last spring!"

She swung the now empty bucket in under the roof, and with one strong pull started it down, thus leaving the two buckets, evenly balanced, hanging in the well.

"My! I was happy!" she went on. "For, you see, my mother-in-law could represent our household on that

pilgrimage. Yes, she went to Tokyo, and Kyoto, and Ise, and all the other famous places, and saw all the shrines and temples. Wasn't it splendid? And you should see all the fine souvenirs she brought back!"

She grasped the handle of the filled bucket and stood up. The weight was but a trifle for her round red arm, and she strode along easily in the direction of the brush fence, beyond which rows and rows of gravestones lifted hoary tops.

Yukiko, ever ready to allow others to take the initiative, followed after this amazing woman. But after they passed the brush fence and found themselves in the well cared for part of the cemetery, the woman stopped.

"Lady," she laughed, half embarrassed and half amused at herself, "I'll have to tell you that I don't know at all what grave plot you want."

"Oh!" Yukiko was surprised. "It is the Toyama plot."

"Maa! Maa! So you are the Honourable Young Madam of the Toyama family!" Overcome at being in the presence of so great a lady, she set her bucket down precipitately on the path. "Well, I didn't know it, although I guessed you might be a lady of some consequence."

Yukiko lowered her eyes before the frank, quizzical stare of the other. She wondered if the woman knew that her father and the Abbot had connived to get that particular cemetery lot away from the descendant of the original owner, whose family before the Restoration had ranked next to the family of Lord Takesu, the daimio himself.

The woman, as if reading Yukiko's thoughts, picked up her bucket and continued talking.

"Of course, some people say it is not good to change the rest place of the dead; but I heard that Chiba San had become so poor that he was glad enough to have the money that came to him from moving his graves to a smaller plot, over in yonder part of the graveyard. And no one can deny that the large single stone inscribed to the whole Chiba family is much more modern and nicer than the broken-down lot of stones all covered with moss that they used to have! In any case, it's no business of mine. And I think your Honourable Father did a grand thing for our town. Why, there is not another temple in this province that has such a fine ornament for its graveyard. Of course, some people say it is more like a park than a rest place for the dead; but, then, think of all the days of work it gave to the men of our town! Yes! Your father was very thoughtful to hire our own workmen instead of bringing them from the city."

"It was for my mother." Yukiko spoke up quickly. "Father had it done in her memory on the anniversary of her death. This was her home town, and I think Father wanted people to know what a fine woman he considered her to be. But I am sure Mother would have been quite as well pleased with something much more simple."

When Yukiko paused, the woman, bubbling with talk, went on at once.

"Yes! Isn't it true? Women are much more easily satis-

fied than men. Men have such big ideas. Now, there was my husband's younger brother—do you think he wanted to be a carpenter like the others of his family? No! He thought he could go to the city and be a great man—like Mr. Toyama. Oh, it was awful for me; for, you see, I am only married into the family, and I couldn't suffer over it nearly as much as I wanted to. Well, he left his heart-broken family and a good living and ran away. Yes, he did. Then, what do you think? We heard he went to work for a carpenter in Tokyo; so, you see, he showed some respect for his father, after all."

They had reached a low iron gate swung between two posts of stone. The woman entered and set the bucket at the foot of the granite shaft, which stood in the centre of the enclosure.

"Maa! I guess you think I talk too much. My husband is always scolding me for it; I wonder sometimes why we have to be married. Well, I don't know *when* I've had a chance to meet such a fine lady! And you, Honourable Tokyo Lady, you really like the country! It's a good thing we all have different likes and dislikes. As they say, some worms prefer water-pepper to sweet-weed."

She looked about the miniature park admiringly.

"What a blessed thing it is when one can afford such a wonderful offering to the departed ancestors! Most folk are hardly able to put in a sho of rice for the priests' donation sacks at spring and autumn equinox time. Well, Honourable Tokyo Lady, I am glad my mother-in-law

sent me this morning to clean our lot. Otherwise I should not have met you. I always say I am the most fortunate woman in the world. But now I must hurry. See that small lot over yonder shaded by the cedars? That is ours."

With that she bowed five or six times, repeating all the appropriate phrases. Yukiko smiled amiably and returned bow for bow, phrase for phrase, quite as if the woman were one of her notable Tokyo friends. At the gate the woman looked back, and Yukiko waved her hand with a flutter of the lacy handkerchief she carried.

Alone, Yukiko seated herself upon a stone bench and looked about the enclosure.

It was, as the woman's words had suggested, ostentatious, presenting a strong contrast to other plots in the cemetery. And yet it was not entirely out of harmony with its setting. While it had been designed by the best landscape gardener in Tokyo, the design had been executed by the leisurely workmen of the country; so to Yukiko it seemed to combine the stimulating satisfaction of real art with a restful feeling of peace and friendliness.

A square granite shaft, unusually tall, rose above a broad granite base, from which the grass-covered ground sloped down to a small, quiet pond. Here the scarlet maples and the small, crooked pines, the shrubbery, and the quaint bridge made of a single irregular slab of rock, were reflected in the still waters.

Yukiko, looking, thought that a red maple leaf had dropped into the pond; but, as she looked again, she saw

it was a shining goldfish that had darted to the surface and set the ripples flashing.

She was thinking how different were the ease and comfort and freedom of country life from the reserve and elaborate conventions of the Tokyo society in which she must move. Afternoon teas were stiff, and dinners and banquets were formal. Of course, there were her old school friends; they were a little different, but even they were subtly changing since becoming mistresses of their own homes. She supposed that she, too, had changed.

Change! Why must people change? Why must things change? When everything was pleasant and happy, why couldn't it stay that way? When she and her father and mother were so happy together, why must her mother die? And her father was changing, too. Oh, would her beloved father die sometime? No. She couldn't—she wouldn't believe *that!*

Her eyes rested upon a clump of autumn flowers beside the cedar hedge. They, too, she mused, would soon droop and wither and die; and then they would blow away. For a moment she held this bitter truth to her heart; but as she thought further, there came an aftertaste of sweetness. The life of these plants would return in the spring; stalk and leaf and flower would again appear. There was something that change could not kill. If she could but find that *something!* She suddenly wished that she knew more of Buddha's teaching about the rebirth of the spirit.

Then came the sound of the temple bell, tolling some hour of prayer, perhaps. Yukiko stood up from the stone bench, listening with a rapt expression on her uplifted face. There came to her the memory of another autumn—another garden. She was standing beside Mrs. Ikeda in front of a gay booth, and in her hand she held a small bronze bell, while the youth of the booth was reading her fortune by the “lot” she had drawn. “The sound of a bell will bring you happiness,” the fortune said.

Happiness! Could it be that she might find happiness? Mrs. Ikeda had said, that day, that the little bell was a copy of the great bell of Koraiji Temple, where the spirits of her ancestors were enshrined. Could it be possible that she might find happiness here within the sound of the temple bell?

The tolling ceased with a long-drawn, quivering echo.

Yukiko sighed. Minoru was always telling her that her thoughts were too far removed from the world of today. Not three days before, when she had told him that she was coming here with her father, he had shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

“What makes you want to visit a temple?” he said. “That’s the trouble with you! You’re as detached from earth as the autumn moon, and quite as cool and unapproachable. Why can’t you like the things that other women like?”

Again Yukiko thought of Mrs. Ikeda. If she were in

Tokyo, Yukiko could go to her with the troubles and puzzles that assailed her; but Mrs. Ikeda had gone to Formosa to be with her son.

Yukiko went to the bucket which the woman had brought for her. She grasped the long handle of the wooden dipper that bobbed on the surface and, holding it carefully, she carried it brimming to the grave of her mother which was just beyond the granite shaft. Then, lifting it high, she poured the pure water over the headstone and stood watching as it traced an irregular wet drawing over the surface.

Her mind was still on the little bronze bell. On the day of Count Takesu's garden party Mrs. Ikeda had received a toy boat as the key to her fortune—and it had proved a prophecy, for she had sailed away. If the little bronze bell should also prove a prophecy . . .

She stood quietly, still holding the little wooden dipper in her hand. She noticed the choice chrysanthemums in the bamboo vases set on either side of the grave.

"The Abbot has been very thoughtful," she thought to herself; "everything is just as it should be for tomorrow's service. And the woman needn't have brought so much water; the plants are all fresh. Well, I will pour it into the goldfish pond."

After that she walked along the winding path. It had many curves, and, much to her surprise, its devious turns soon brought her back to the stone bench.

She was half inclined to sit down again and enjoy the

songs of birds and insects and the gliding flight of dragon flies in the clear blue sky. But there came a sound of high, sweet chanting. A little curious, she turned and walked in that direction. As for the bucket, she would tell the Abbot, and he would send a boy priest for it.

CHAPTER XVI

INCENSE

YUKIKO left the Toyama plot and took the narrow footpath which led off in the direction from which came the chanting. It wound through a more neglected part of the cemetery, and the tall grasses and bushes on either side brushed rudely against her.

As she drew near a somewhat more pretentious plot, a half-grown lad came out from a side path, and hurried on ahead of her. She looked over the untrimmed hedge and on the single gravestone read, "The Grave of the Chiba Family." Her throat tightened with a feeling of pity, and she decided to ask her father if they could share with the Chiba plot some of the care so lavishly expended on their own.

The chanting had grown louder, and now she could see a brown tile roof. Presently her path found a convenient gap in the brush fence, and stepping through, she found herself in a wholly unexpected place.

Startled, she stopped short. There were buildings there, but she could not be quite sure just what they were. One was a large two-story frame house. It did not seem to be a house in the ordinary sense; nor yet a school, although

the side walls were full of windows. Perhaps it might be one of those "many new things" which, according to the woman she had seen in the cemetery, the Abbot had been doing for his parishioners.

As for the smaller building, set directly in front of the other, it was unmistakably a temple; the steeply sloping thatch roof, the flight of wide steps leading up to the narrow porch that edged the building on three sides, with its railing supported by brass-capped posts, all told this; and, moreover, the chanting, which sounded from within, was distinctly religious in tone.

Leaving her sandals at the foot of the flight, Yukiko went up the smooth steps in her mittened feet, treading softly lest she disturb the worship of the small group assembled there. It must be the noon hour of prayer, she thought, as she noticed that most of those present were old people. And it was no wonder the chanting had sounded so clear and sweet, since the singers were all of them priestesses.

Yukiko seated herself upon the matted floor behind the other worshippers, where, like them, she sat facing the Buddha. Through the clouds of fragrant, curling incense carrying upward the prayers of the people, the calm face looked down with a silent, mystic message of sympathy and protection.

The chant rose and fell in rhythmic time with the soft thud of the wooden drum and the mellow "don-ng! don-ng!" of the bronze gong. But now and then, when the

voices of the worshippers arose in a murmur of prayer, the chanting lowered for just a moment to a soft whispering melody.

None of the people gathered there could understand the holy words of the ritual, for they were ancient, mystic words; but as each in his own measure, uplifted by the rhythm and tone and atmosphere, ventured into the spirit realm, Yukiko too yielded herself to the blessed influence.

Then abruptly the service ended.

The Mother-priestess, who had been sitting at the feet of the Buddha, turned herself about and came among the people. Very amiably and sociably she exchanged greetings with one and another, not with formality, but as a well known friend.

While Yukiko was considering what would be the polite thing for her to do, the Mother-priestess drew near her.

"Your worship has been accepted," she said pleasantly.

"I deeply appreciate the opportunity of joining in this holy service," replied Yukiko, with a deep bow.

"I think you may have come from Tokyo to worship at the grave of your ancestors. Your devotion is acceptable to Buddha.—Hail, Holy Buddha! Namu, Amida, Butsu!" She rubbed her rosary softly, at the same time kindly smiling at Yukiko. "I seem to have seen you before, but I cannot recall your name."

"Yukiko Toyama."

"You mean that you are a daughter of the Toyamas? Ah, I remember now! It is your mother! You look so like

her that I thought I had met you before. As indeed I have—long ago. But you were only a toddling wee one, then, holding your mother's hand. Maa! Maa! How time flies!"

She gazed at Yukiko for a moment with pleased interest.

"I doubt if you even know of me," she said presently, "but once your mother and I were young girls together. Has your mother ever told you of our girlish frolics in this country town? Ah! Forgive me! I forgot. She entered Paradise long years ago. But, my child, while I am serving Buddha here, your sainted mother is serving Buddha on the other side of the Sanzu River. You must remember that."

She turned back the sweeping sleeves of her gray ceremonial dress so that her hands would be free. She was constantly slipping the crystal beads of her rosary through her fingers as she talked.

"It would be hard to believe that your mother and I were ever tomboys, I suppose; yet so it was, although my father once said that he wished I could be gentle and lovable like my friend. But he should have seen her when we were on cherry-viewing excursions—she chasing me and throwing handfuls of fallen petals at me. Ah, my dear!—and we always exchanged lunches at school; and when we went mushroom hunting in the fall we never hunted mushrooms for ourselves, but for each other."

She smiled, but with the throb of a sigh beneath it. "Namu, Amida, Butsu!" she murmured rather sadly.

Her manner had changed. The vivacity had gone from her voice, and once again she was the stately grave priestess, with features relaxed into the expression of one withdrawn from the joys and cares of the world.

For a moment she fingered her beads, then her manner changed again.

"I must have a word with some of these other people," she said. "Won't you speak to that lad over there? He has come from Tokyo on a school excursion."

Yukiko saw that it was the boy who had come out of the Chiba grave plot just ahead of her, so she was not surprised to learn that he was a Chiba. From his blue-gray uniform and the metal badge on the front of his cap it was evident that he was a middle-school student. The shabby condition of his clothes did not seem to make him in the least self-conscious, and he talked to Yukiko very freely about the excursion and how his teacher had excused him from one of the sightseeing trips so that he might pay respect to the grave of his ancestors.

When the Mother-priestess rejoined them, the boy said he must get back to his classmates; and taking an envelope from his pocket he laid it just within the door and, as he bowed, pushed it toward the priestess.

"My aunt's photograph," he said. "My father told me to give it to you."

He bowed again and went out. An old woman near Yukiko sighed as her eyes followed his thin, straight figure.

"So that fine lad is the heir of the Chiba family! He is a

samurai. Yes—after all, blood tells. Yes, indeed—blood tells.” She nodded knowingly.

The priestess turned to Yukiko.

“Do you happen to know,” she asked, “that the father of that boy is one of the greatest scholars this town has ever sent out into the world? Unfortunately he is rather peculiar. He is one of those learned men who regard this world as so degenerate that he will not grapple with it in order to make a living.”

“Maa!” said the old woman. “I remember his wife. You don’t often see such a gentle, pretty bride as she was. When he brought her to visit in this town, I said then that she was actually an incarnation of the goddess Kwannon. That’s just what I said. And I am sure she came down to this world on purpose to give birth to that boy. You watch, and you will see. That lordly boy will become a great someone before he has lived his age over again.”

“Let us have a look at the boy’s aunt,” said the priestess as she opened the envelope the boy had placed beside her. “Hum! She appears as capable as she is said to be.”

The old woman with great pride drew out a pair of old-fashioned spectacles from an aluminum case, rested them carefully just above the end of her nose, and peered at the photograph.

“Saa!” she exclaimed with interest. “And is that the great city of Tokyo?”

The priestess laughed.

“No, Tanabe San. It’s the great city of New York. Miss

Chiba went to New York last year as a governess with some very good family—a bank president, I think.”

“Maa!” the old woman drawled admiringly.

“She is a very practical young woman,” said the priestess. “It is fortunate she is not like her brother. I feel it is a great pity that she became a Christian.”

“A Christian? Maa!” The expressive exclamation of the old woman indicated incredulity. “A Chiba cast off the ancestral religion! Maa! Maa! That is very disrespectful!”

She shook her head solemnly from side to side as she slowly removed her spectacles. She was about to return them to their aluminum case, when, on second thought, she held them out to Yukiko.

“Here, Young Madam. The picture is so small you had better put on these spectacles.”

“Thank you,” said Yukiko, smiling. “I really can see quite well.”

“As you like. I always think a pair of glasses helps you to see better; and ever since my husband died I have used his.”

Although Yukiko smiled and nodded, the words had gone meaningless into her ears. She had become absorbed in the photograph. That head held so proudly, that almost masculine simplicity of clothing—— Where had she seen that girl before? It puzzled her, and somehow gave her an unpleasant feeling. With an effort she put the question away and turned her attention to what the priestess was saying to the old woman.

"Sometimes a great sorrow in one's life will cause one to change one's religion."

"Hey! Sorrow? What kind of a great sorrow?"

The priestess answered gently, "The same old story of the 'heart killer.'"

Yukiko drew a sharp breath and listened intently.

"The man she trusted and expected to marry gave her up for someone with money."

Yukiko, with the instinctive movement of every startled Japanese woman, gently thrust her hand within the upper fold of her sash. There had come to her a sharp pang of understanding. The tang of burning autumn leaves rose to her nostrils, and she saw as clear as though it were before her a half-burned photograph in the embers.

"Ah, it must be Minoru who broke this Chiba girl's heart when he——"

She shuddered, and the colour drained from her face, leaving it ashy white.

"What is it? Are you ill?" the priestess asked in alarm.

"Oh!" gasped Yukiko. "The poor girl! I am so sorry!" Somehow she felt herself to blame.

"My child," the priestess laid her hand over Yukiko's, "tragedy is disaster only when we permit it to wreck our lives. Miss Chiba's life is not wrecked. Rather her trouble seems to have made her finer and more ambitious."

The colour returned slowly to Yukiko's cheeks, but the priestess was curious. As an old friend of her mother she felt she might question Yukiko.

"Perhaps you know Kotoko Chiba?" she asked.

"No." Yukiko hesitated. "No. I have never met her. But once, at Count Takesu's garden party, Mrs. Ikeda pointed her out to me. She was looking after the children's sports." After a moment she added, "I must be going now. The Abbot and my father will have finished their talk by this time."

"You will come again, my child?" asked the priestess in a sympathetic voice.

She yearned to help the trouble which looked out at her from the younger woman's eyes.

"Oh, thank you—I shall be glad to come. You—I——" Her voice trembled. "Thank you. I will surely come."

She bowed and went out.

Yukiko, treading the same path by which she had come, found herself repeating, with wonder in her heart, the words of the Mother-priestess:

"My child, tragedy is disaster only when we permit it to wreck our lives."

CHAPTER XVII

THE KETTLE-PLACING CEREMONY

GORO, Miyo's father, one of the master carpenters of Tokyo, bent over the bench in the waiting pavilion.

"Smooth as a baby's cheek!" he said to himself, passing his hand over the wood lovingly, "and that is as it should be."

He straightened up and looked around. His critical glance passed carefully over every pillar and beam and board of the pavilion. Each had been planed and sand-papered and rubbed with the hand, until now one could see the grain of the wood through the softly gleaming surface as one sees pebbles on the floor of a shallow stream. Even this outside shelter, which was only an adjunct to the ceremonial tea house, must be perfect before Goro could be satisfied.

He looked about the miniature garden. This too, had been entrusted to him to lay out. The ground was thickly strewn with glossy brown pine needles, and a path of stepping stones, pleasingly irregular in shape, wound in from the low gate, passed the pavilion, and went on in graceful curves to the thatch-roofed cottage, which was to be the tea-ceremony house.

The path wound just enough to require the slight attention of one who might walk on it—just enough to win one's thoughts away from the cares of the world, as should be when one enters a tea-ceremony room. Small shrubs, dwarf pines, mossy rocks carefully chosen and carefully set, all blended in an artistic setting for the small house which Madam Toyama was counting upon as being, when finished, her greatest pride.

During the past summer Goro had recovered entirely, and it gratified him to think that Mr. Toyama had waited for him to become able to undertake the construction of this tea-ceremony house. Not every carpenter could be trusted with the small details of this work, which were the more important owing to the utter simplicity of the building. The two men had spent hours discussing the materials, which must be of the best and yet have the appearance of refined poverty.

They had chosen as the site the southeast corner of the spacious garden. Here a clump of tall, straight, red-bark pines stood guard at the top of a steep slope.

"From the pavilion we shall be able to see the new moon," Mr. Toyama had said.

"And is that good?" asked Goro.

"Yes; for the new moon will remind us that everything we know changes. In fact, it is only in change that we find the essence of eternity."

"Ah, Honourable Master, that is beyond my knowing. I cannot understand."

"Perhaps I don't understand it myself, Goro. But there again the new moon teaches us; for its full light comes only when its cycle of time is finished."

Mr. Toyama's face had looked rather sad as he talked, Goro thought; and as they walked along he wondered if rumours were true that his master was failing in health.

A short time after this conversation, Mr. Toyama had gone for a visit to his native town, and now he had returned, and Goro was eager for him to inspect the work, which was practically finished.

He pulled his hammer from his belt and rubbed its use-polished handle affectionately before he stooped to carefully tap a pebble embedded in the moss that was growing in a crevice on the side of one of the stepping stones. So slightly was it moved that he seemed hardly to have touched it, when he rose and, standing back with his head on one side, examined it with care. Finally he nodded and returned the hammer to his belt.

"That is better," he said to himself. "I am fortunate in having faithful assistants, but I fear the workmen of today value time too much. They do not have the artistic pride in their own work, as did the carpenters of olden days."

He looked up at the maple branches above him. They were gorgeous with autumn foliage. Grasping one, he shook down a shower of gold and scarlet leaves upon the path.

"There! That is better," he said. "The path was too bare before."

His eyes sought the sky, like one who holds unspoken communion with the weather. As always, autumn had proved a good season for building, and it looked as if the fine weather would hold.

"In that case," he murmured, with another glance at the sky, "the finishing touches can be put on without delay."

He looked around him.

It was surprising how short the days were now. Already the shadows were lengthening, and there was a decided chill in the air. He drew out a large nickel watch from a fold of his wide cloth belt and found that it was only a little after half-past three.

"It won't be bad to have a bit of a bonfire," he thought, and, raising his voice, he called to an apprentice whom he could hear sweeping behind the house.

"Oi-i-i!"

A stout young fellow appeared, flourishing a long-handled broom taller than himself by a foot-and-a-half.

"You called, Master? What are your orders?"

"Boy, bring to our place outside the gate a few crispy shavings—enough to last for one smoke of a pipe."

"Hey! Hey! At once I shall do it," cheerfully replied the boy.

In a moment he reappeared with an armful of curly, pinky shavings, sweet with the odour of freshly cut wood, and followed Goro to a place which had been cleared for working.

"Here!" said Goro, pointing.

"Hey!" responded the boy, and laid his burden carefully on the ground.

"Yoi! Fine!" approved the master. "Now—a match!"

His left hand in a wide gesture described a circle and came to his all-containing cloth belt, from which he took his tobacco pouch and little pipe. While he was still coaxing his fire he heard the sound of approaching footsteps and looked up to see a maid from the mansion bearing a large tea tray.

"Arra! Nei San, is it already afternoon-tea time?" he called with feigned astonishment.

"Yes, Daiku San. It is past three." The maid bowed primly and set down the tray on a pile of new boards.

"I wonder," queried Goro, "if Honourable Master is at home."

"Yes, he is; and the Madam said to tell you that he and she are coming here after you have finished your tea."

"Ah, thank you. That is just right. And thank you for your trouble in bringing us the tea."

With another prim bow the maid hurried back in the direction she had come; and Goro again lifted up his deep voice in a loud call.

"Oi-i-i! Oi-i-i! Refreshments are here! Come and eat!"

"Oi-i-i!" echoed the boy, in exactly his master's voice. "Come and eat!"

"Bad boy!" Goro reproved him, half laughing, as they seated themselves.

In a few minutes two workmen appeared, and the four made a friendly group around the fire.

"It's steamed sweet potatoes today, and bean cakes besides," said Goro, helping himself and passing the heaped-up tray. "I throw dice that it's Young Madam's thoughtfulness."

"Hurrah for Young Madam!" exclaimed the boy, with his mouth full.

"My Miyo, when she worked at the mansion," continued Goro, with a good-natured scowl at the impudent boy, "used to say that Young Madam was very fond of sweet potatoes."

"So am I!" declared the irrepressible boy, reaching over for a large half and sprinkling it liberally with salt.

"Eh, you half-wise fellow!" said one of the men, pushing an elbow against the squatting boy and upsetting him. They all laughed, and the other workman, an elderly man, remarked that something hot tasted good these chilly days. Then they all drank tea, sipping it from the small cups with noisy appreciation.

"Now, you!" Goro said to his men, as he rose to his feet; "we must get on with our work. Honourable Master is anxious for us to finish, as Honourable Madam wants to have the Kettle-Placing Ceremony before the end of the year. We must do our best, for I know that if our work finds favour in Honourable Master's eyes, our New Year holidays will be merry. So let our last work be even better than our first. What do you say, you?"

"We think alike, Master!" chorused the three.

"Then off with you—else, darkness will catch you with too little done."

The men scrambled to their feet and jogged back to their work behind the house. Goro was alone only a moment when the Master and Madam emerged from beyond the bamboo thicket. As soon as he saw them, he jerked off the blue-and-white towel which was twisted around his head, and holding it tightly gripped in his left hand he strode forward to meet them.

"Honourable Master and Madam!" he said, bowing deeply, "splendid it is to see you in good health."

"I hear that your entire household is in excellent health also," said Mr. Toyama. "That is good indeed."

Then Madam Toyama spoke.

"Daiku San, are you quite sure that we shall be able to have the Kettle-Placing Ceremony before the end of the year? If not, I can hardly endure it!"

"You see, Goro," Mr. Toyama explained indulgently, "Madam wishes to have this ceremony early so that she can have her ceremonial tea party before any of her friends get around to the usual ceremonial teas of New Year."

"You *will* finish, won't you?" pleaded Madam Toyama, smiling archly at Goro.

"Yes, Madam! Yes, indeed!" promised Goro, with many bows. "I think I can safely say, if my faithful assistants lend me their hands as willingly as in the past, that I

can surely turn the building over to you in the first week of December."

They were standing near the working place. Mr. Toyama stooped and picked up a thin, curly shaving and tossed it lightly on his palm.

"Pretty good lumber you are using on our tea-ceremony room. I hope you understand how much I appreciate your painstaking care."

Goro bowed.

"Honourable Master," he said, "your kind words gratify me. And as the work is so near its completion, perhaps you may like to inspect the grounds and building. Now, this fence here—— Excuse me——"

As he spoke, Goro went a step before them, and at his touch the two sleeves of the gate swung open, and they all entered the miniature garden. Mr. Toyama and Goro began examining the low fence of bamboo lattice work. Madam Toyama stood a moment watching them, but that part of the work did not interest her. Of course, there had to be the fence and the garden and the tea-ceremony room; but these were interesting to her only as a setting for the famous men and women who would come here. People were the important things in Madam Toyama's life—people and their bearing toward herself.

As she stood, leaning lightly against the rustic gate, her eyes carelessly following her husband and Goro as they went from place to place or stood talking earnestly, her mind drifted into a long-planned dream of the future.

"After the tea-ceremony house is finished," she thought, "and before the New Year gaieties begin, I will give a 'Farewell to the Year' party, and have it a ceremonial tea. I will ask O Iemoto, the great tea master, to come from Kyoto to conduct the ceremony, and I will invite Count and Countess Takesu. They, with myself and Mr. Toyama—and of course the great O Iemoto as host—will make 'The Complete Five.' That will be just right, according to prescribed etiquette. Then I will invite Baron Nishiki, perhaps, and somebody else—and this one and that one, making in all three groups. Just a good number for a small, exclusive affair, such as this will be."

So thinking, she tiptoed along the stepping stones—just as her honourable guests would do, one group at a time, on that uncertain day in the future—until she reached the waiting pavilion.

"Here the guests will sit down"—so her thoughts ran—"and perhaps after they have admired the tiny rivulet, which by that time will be rippling over its pebbled bed, just over there, I will mention quite casually that the great O Iemoto is very busy, but even so he has been so kind as to listen to my pleadings and consent to come to Tokyo especially for this occasion. Then one of the guests, perhaps Countess Takesu, will say that it is a great honour to be invited to a ceremony where the great O Iemoto is to be the host."

This would all be very gratifying, and she smiled pleasantly to herself, as her thoughts ran on.

"Then I will tap the little wooden gong that will be hanging on the post over there, and when the mellow sound has announced to the great O Iemoto that the guests are in the waiting pavilion, he will appear at the door of the tea-ceremony room bowing a welcome. Then we will go, one at a time, I the last of all. . . ."

Madam Toyama's imagination urged her forward, and her feet kept time to her imagination. She rose from the bench that was "as smooth as a baby's cheek," and stepping down to the path, she followed its windings toward the thatch-roofed cottage. She stopped beside the high rustic stone with its hollowed-out top, and in her mind lifting the long, slender handle of an imaginary bamboo dipper, she poured a few invisible drops of water over her fingers and dried them daintily on an oblong piece of white paper which she drew from the fold of her dress just above the sash.

Then she turned toward the tea-ceremony house and looked up.

Beneath the wide eaves above the entrance door was a sword rack, just like the ceremony rooms of ancient days; for a samurai, before he entered a tea-ceremony room, always removed his two swords, and with them all thoughts of self and the world.

There would be no samurai here, and consequently no swords, but even so it was good to have the rack there to remind them that this was a house of peace. It was a house of humility, too, for all who entered the tea-ceremony

room must pass through the small square door where each one would have to deeply bow the head and shoulders. All were equal here. Countess Takesu must bow as low as Madam Toyama.

She stepped to the door, and placing her knees on the sill, she easily slipped through the two-foot-square opening and stood looking around the room.

Like all tea-ceremony rooms, this was nine feet square, having on the floor four and a half mats, fitted closely together with the half-mat in the centre; thus making the pattern of the sacred swastika—showing that the ceremony originated in Buddhism. The tokonoma was simple and rustic, with an unraised platform of rich, dark, highly polished wood. The post seemed to be the trunk of a slender tree, wind twisted and with the bark raggedly half peeled off. But it was polished as smooth as satin.

Madam Toyama looked at it with admiration, but also there was calculation in her gaze.

“Now we must have just the right decoration for the tokonoma,” she thought. “I will call my flower-arrangement teacher. She will know the most appropriate flowers to use for this occasion; and I’ll get out all the choice kakemono, so we may choose the most suitable one to hang on the wall behind the flower arrangement.”

Her imagination would probably have carried her on through the whipping up of the tea powder with the bamboo whisk and the drinking of the jade-green froth from the exquisite ancient-looking bowl; but just as she was

picturing the O Iemoto seated beside the sunken fireplace, she heard the voice of her husband in conversation with Goro outside.

"Oh, are you here?" Mr. Toyama, with bowed head, was peering through the low door. "I wondered where you were. When I looked around you had disappeared, and I feared you might have become tired of being neglected and gone back to the house. I'm sorry to have left you alone so long."

He stooped and entered. As he lifted his head, a hot sharp pain darted through his heart. He gasped and leaned over against the wall, his hand pressed to his side. Goro was beside him in a moment.

"What is it, Master?" asked the carpenter anxiously.

"Eh! Maa! It is nothing. It will pass," Mr. Toyama managed to say after a moment.

Though the light was dim, Goro could see that his master's face was waxen white. He turned to Madam Toyama.

"How is it best to do?" he asked.

"There is nothing we can do," she answered, fanning her husband with her wide sleeve. "The doctor has told him he must not overexert himself, and this inspection has been too much for him after going downtown this morning."

"I am sorry, Honourable Master. I am very sorry."

There was real concern in Goro's voice.

"Don't be anxious." Mr. Toyama tried to smile. "See! I am better already."

He straightened up and nodded his head to reassure them; and indeed, his recovery was almost as sudden as the attack had been.

"You had better inspect the inside of the building another day, Husband. It is too dark now, anyway."

"I suppose so."

They returned to the waiting pavilion without mishap; but as they picked their way along the stepping stones, and again as they followed the winding path to the mansion, Goro kept unobtrusively near Mr. Toyama's side, seeking to cover his anxiety by talk on one subject and another.

Mr. Toyama once would have resented anything suggesting his inferiority even in the matter of strength; but now he was rather grateful for Goro's care, so tactfully extended.

CHAPTER XVIII

BARE TREES

EARLY winter in Tokyo holds no discomfort. The cold is only sharp enough to make a little fire seem pleasant, and even the beggars in front of the temples have as yet enough rags to keep them warm.

Mr. Toyama had noticed such a beggar squatting on the ground in front of the Inari Shrine as he drove past in the afternoon. It occurred to him that, if he were a beggar, that was the very place he would choose in which to follow his profession; for the worshippers who came here were men and women praying for success in business, and such people would be likely to give to those who were less fortunate than themselves. He remembered a distant day when he himself, recently arrived from the North and somewhat dismayed by the bustling ways of Tokyo, had come to this shrine. He recalled vividly the feeling of prosperity and satisfaction with which he had dropped a few coins into the dingy little box of one of the beggars.

He passed the shrine and drove on to the residence of the British Ambassador, where he had been invited to dinner.

Mr. Toyama had not been going out much of late, but he and the Ambassador had been friends ever since they

met at a banquet of the Asiatic Society. At that meeting they had discovered a common interest in old Chinese curios, of which the Ambassador had picked up some interesting pieces while stationed in Peking. Now he was about to return to England, and Mr. Toyama wished to present him for his collection an antique jade inro, in which some long-since-departed mandarin had kept his bit of medicine when travelling.

The Ambassador was greatly pleased with the gift, especially as Mr. Toyama had treasured this particular inro for years; and in admiring it, and learning how Mr. Toyama had accidentally come across the beautiful thing, quite naturally his host asked about his early experiences as a lacquer-ware merchant. It had been years since those old days had been recalled in detail, but the Ambassador had lent such an interested ear that Mr. Toyama talked on and on.

He told of his beginning in a small-town store, where he had kept simple and inexpensive wares, mostly the furnishings for Buddhist house shrines. Also he had welcomed people to his store when they brought their chipped or cracked lacquer articles to be repaired. He and his wife had been thrifty, putting away their small savings in the post office, to be ready against possible opportunity.

And opportunity had come. When the government founded a new college in a near-by city, Mr. Toyama, alert and industrious, had secured the contract for making the desks used by the students. One thing, successfully

carried out, had led to others. He prospered, and after several years had removed to Tokyo, where his interest in the old art of China and Japan gradually led him into the curio business. A few shrewd purchases, a few fortunate sales, and he had found himself with money to invest in stocks and bonds. His securities had been chosen with the same careful judgment he had shown in all his business dealings, and he had succeeded far beyond his hope; but if the war had not occurred, his riches would not have piled up so rapidly.

At last Mr. Toyama pushed his cushion aside to take his leave.

"It has been years since I have talked so much of the past," he said. "You must think me a very garrulous old man!"

"On the contrary," his host assured him, "I have been greatly interested in your experiences; and if ever you wish to add to them the further experience of a trip to England, I shall be happy to have you visit me in London."

Mr. Toyama thanked him, promising to do so, although he had a feeling that he would probably never leave the shores of his own country.

On the way home he asked the chauffeur to pass slowly by the Inari shrine. It was unlighted and closed. A round moon was pouring a bluish light over the road and brushing with frosty silver the roofs and trees beyond the stone wall. As they passed he peered into the shadows where the gate roof spread out over the steps. Its cold, stony black-

ness sheltered no one now, but as the car rolled by he caught a glimpse of a woman before the gates, and heard the "clap-clap" of her hands as she bowed toward the deity in the darkness beyond.

When he reached home he thought that he would stroll about the garden a little. Somehow, he felt restless. Perhaps it was the rich food he had eaten, although he had remembered the doctor's injunction not to eat too heartily. Perhaps it was the excitement recalling his early days. Whatever it might have been, he did not feel like going at once into his heated house, so he decided to have a look at the tea-ceremony house in the moonlight.

Only the week before, the opening meeting had been held. The famous tea master had come from Kyoto to preside over the ceremony. Every detail had gone through as Teruko had planned it, and she had seemed well satisfied.

He reached the tiny gate, passed through, and went along the stepping stones, which lay like islands of light in the midst of a river of darkness. Save for the fringe of pines, the trees were bare. Each stood forth in its essential simplicity, letting the moonlight stream through the leafless branches.

He stopped at the tiny waiting-pavilion and sat down on the bench. The moonlight seemed to cast a spell over everything.

Yes, he reflected, the house was set in exactly the right position to get the best effect of the moonlight. His eyes

rested on the moon-silvered roof-tree and followed the slope of rough thatch down to the low eaves. As he sat silent in the moonlight, there came to his mind another thatch-roofed house—not at all like this one, except the thatch. It was the one to which he had taken Toki as a bride. She was a sweet, simple woman—always the same. It was queer—now that he thought of it—that he should have built this small, unpretentious, almost sombre-looking tea-ceremony house for Teruko with her gay tastes, and the strikingly elaborate and pretentious tomb for Toki! But then, when Toki was alive, they had never had time for cultural things; and the only way he knew to show appreciation of her worth and loyalty to her memory was by beautifying her last resting place.

He wished that Toki had lived to enjoy some of this later comfort and luxury. She deserved it. How faithful she had been! It was she who had encouraged him that time when he had told her his plan—the plan that had set him on the road to prosperity.

“Toki,” he had said, “if we stay here we shall spend our lives like a ‘carp in a well.’”

“You are right,” she had agreed, “and it is not necessary. You can easily swim in larger waters, and who knows? You might become like ‘a great red snapper in the open sea’!”

So they had left their country town and found a new home in Tokyo “under the Imperial knee.”

He recalled an incident he had not thought of for years.

Just as they were leaving the old place, Toki had come in from the garden with two or three small plants of sazanka, as wild camellia is called.

"I am taking these mountain-tea plants to Tokyo," she had said, wrapping the roots in an old newspaper. "The flowers will remind us to be brave even in winter weather."

They had moved from one house to another, as their prosperity increased, but the camellia plants had been moved too. Toki always remembered, and after she was gone he had taught Yukiko to cherish them. She had brought them even when they came to his present palatial home. They must be right over there, in the corner of the garden.

He stood up.

Yes, there they were—quite tall now—standing beside the gray stone wall. He could see them faintly in the moonlight. And, true to their nature, they bore their red and white blossoms in spite of the December cold.

He shivered. It was cold; and, except for the pines and Toki's camellias, all the trees were bare. They looked lonely and cold. He too was lonely and cold—and bare. Yes, bare. The strivings that had kept life young and the hopes that had made it beautiful were dropping from him. He sighed, but the next moment, as he looked up, he smiled.

"The light of heaven can shine better through leafless branches," he thought. "I've always been too busy to think much about heaven and religion, and all that; but

now I have plenty of time, so I must study some about those things. Perhaps if I write to the Abbot of Koraiji Temple he will send someone who can read the old religious books with me. Yes, I will think of it."

A cold wind stirred the bare branches. He felt really chilly, so he started for the house. He found himself hurrying, and presently he was handing his cane to the steward, who met him at the door. He was somewhat out of breath and went at once to his room, where he sank down on his cushion. The maid brought tea and went out again.

He leaned against a low elbow rest and hoped that he would soon feel better.

If Toki were alive—Toki! One could not ask for a more faithful wife than she had been, devoting her whole thought to him and their little Yukiko. Never an ambition beyond the prosperity and happiness of her husband! When they had opened their curio shop in Azabu she had found time to help him after her housework was done. That had been a great encouragement, and they had prospered. He had felt very rich when he could afford a clerk for the shop and a maid for Toki; but she had seemed almost provoked at the prosperity which he had thought made it unnecessary for her to prepare his meals, and every once in a while she would prepare some special dish for him with her own hands.

He sighed, thinking of the rich food he had eaten at the Ambassador's that evening. He longed for something simple; so, as he had often done before on returning from a

foreign banquet, he rang his bell for the maid, and when she came he ordered a bowl of rice.

"And with it you may bring me a pot of tea and some salted plums."

He sighed again. Toki would have forestalled this request. She would have brought him a simple tray on his return. Of course, he had never expected such a thing of Teruko. Anyway, tonight she was at the Kabuki Theatre with Minoru.

And Yukiko had gone with them, little as she liked the theatre. She was trying to be a good wife and enter into the pleasures her husband enjoyed. But her father wondered sometimes if she was happy. He feared that she was not. If only her mother had lived to bring her up! He himself had been so occupied with business that he had left her to the care of Mrs. Ikeda and then of Teruko.

Teruko was always occupied with entertaining. Perhaps it had been a mistake to let Mrs. Ikeda go. If he had urged her she might have been persuaded to stay. But Teruko was so sure it would be better. Well, perhaps she was right—and yet she had certainly been mistaken in thinking that Yukiko cared anything at all for Masao Ikeda, for Yukiko had never once mentioned his name. And then Masao—had he been wise to let the boy go? Such a fine manly boy as he had always been! He wondered. He had kept track of Masao and had been secretly glad that the young man was making a career for himself.

Perhaps he had been too ambitious for Yukiko's sake, in

marrying her into the nobility. Yukiko was like her mother in not caring for pomp and position. For that matter, neither did he himself care for such things. His interest in money had been the exciting game of getting it, rather than any satisfaction there might be in having it.

Really, he ought to have given a little more time to studying Minoru's character before deciding to take him as his son. Minoru did not seem to have a knack for business. Several of his ventures had failed, and his investments had been unfortunate a number of times. Of late he had avoided talking over business matters with his father on the plea of Mr. Toyama's health. Teruko had called his attention to her nephew's consideration, and—well, yes; he had been very thoughtful when Mr. Toyama was ill those few days recently. He had come home early, bringing bits of political chat to the sick-bed, but when Mr. Toyama had recovered, Minoru had resumed his "business engagements," which Mr. Toyama suspected were not always for business. Perhaps he ought to speak to Minoru. Yes; he would do so in a day or so.

His head felt hot. The maid had turned on the electric heater in his room as if he were still sick. He reached out his hand and slid back the shoji. The air on the porch was cool, although the glass doors that ran along the outer edge were closed. There! He felt better at once! The coolness always made him feel better.

The maid entered and set the tray of rice and tea and a tiny dish of salted plums before him.

He was glad he had recovered from his sickness. It was so miserable to have to stay in bed and be fussed over like a baby. They still fussed over him, but perhaps if he went with Teruko to Miyanoshita, as she had been begging him to, that would show them that he was all right again. Yes! That was what he would do. As soon as Teruko came home he would tell her that he would go.

CHAPTER XIX

HIDDEN BEHIND THE CLOUD

IT WAS just before dawn. The world without was silent, and chilly with early winter frost, but the Toyama mansion was brightly lighted and astir with hushed excitement.

In the deserted room of Yukiko, on her desk, lay a telegram—open and weighted at the right edge top and the left edge bottom with a pair of bronze paperweights.

The message stared grimly from the paper:

Miyanoshita, Dec. 28.

TO MINORU TOYAMA:

Neither the power of medicine nor the care of doctor held sufficient merit. After Horse-hour 2:52 Honourable Father is dead. This is reported.

Teruko.

電報送達紙

宛		種類		数字		発信局番		受		付	
トウキヤウ アラヤマ トヤマミールサマ		四九		ハコネ ミヤノシタ		月 日		時 分		●受付当日受付せしものは月日を記入せず ●受付時刻の表示中「〇」とあるは午前 「△」とあるは午後を指す	
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製所利世集三和昭 省 信 越

CHAPTER XX

THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE

EXCUSE me, Young Madam."

Natsu, kneeling in the hall outside Yukiko's closed door, bowed her head as politely as if she were in range of her mistress's eyes.

"What is it, Natsu?" Yukiko asked.

"The flowers Young Madam ordered have been delivered. Shall the man wait or be dismissed?"

"Thank you. Have him wait. I will see him at once and myself receive the precious burden he has brought."

On the polished boards of the kitchen floor were several broad, shallow bamboo baskets, each containing white flowers. There were several different kinds. Yukiko, half stooping, half kneeling, bent over them.

"These are very beautiful! They are just what I want. It was good of you to bring so many for me to choose from."

She smiled kindly at the delivery clerk, who was standing down in the open vestibule of the kitchen. The young man looked very neat and trim in his coolie coat of dark blue, with the name of his store dyed in white on the neck bands and the back. He bowed again and again as he talked.

"My master wishes to pay his respects to the honourable household, on this sacred 'forty-ninth day,'" he said, "and he told me to say that our shop is at your service as long as it suits you. Please kindly honour us with your commands."

"I appreciate his thought, and also the care he has taken to fill our order," was Yukiko's quiet reply. "He must have taken a great deal of trouble to get the flowers which are out of season now."

She pointed to the azalea, iris, and wisteria.

"Not at all! Not at all!" the young man protested with many bows. "As for that, there are hothouses nowadays, and gardeners are learning to do wonders. I could even have brought you white roses; only, of course, you would not want them on account of the thorns!"

"Not roses," agreed Yukiko. "However beautiful, roses never can be used for the shrine. But these lilies—" she lifted in her two hands a basket containing long-stemmed, delicate white lilies—"these are exquisite and most suitable!"

The young man bowed again and took his departure. Then Yukiko turned to her sweetly sad task of arranging the flowers.

Had the housekeeper been still with them it is likely she would have helped Yukiko, as the arrangement of flowers was one of her recommendations for the position, but she had left soon after Mr. Toyama's death. Minoru had said that it would be good for Yukiko to have the responsi-

bility of looking after the household, and Madam Toyama had agreed; so Yukiko had become the mistress of the house. Her stepmother complained that she was not well. Yukiko was sorry for this; nevertheless, she rejoiced in the feeling of usefulness which her new responsibilities gave her. And now, as she looked over the array of brass vases, she was glad that she and she only was to arrange the flowers in the shrine room in loving honour of the tablet with the new name.

At the end of each seven days since her father's death the priests had come to celebrate the seven stages of the journey of his spirit from Earth to Paradise. Gathered with the members of the family in the shrine room, they had chanted their weird mystic prayers, and now, on this day of seven-times-seven, his journey would end.

Although it was not a custom, it pleased Yukiko's fancy to arrange the flowers in seven vases and to carry them in seven trips to the shrine room. As she was doing this, she was wondering what form her father had taken for his journey. Surely he would be robed in linen, fine and white; for so she had seen him at the last when he lay in his stately cypress coffin. She tried to picture him wearing a wide sedge hat and leaning on a bamboo staff, like all pilgrims. His straw sandals must be getting thin in the soles by now, for he was nearly at the end of his long journey.

She could scarcely realize that it was only seven weeks since the sad day when her father had started on his

pilgrimage. It seemed as if years had passed; and yet, on the other hand, each day had gone by swiftly, every hour filled with duties. In addition to the many unusual and necessary happenings, the family had been kept busy receiving callers, serving them tea and cakes and listening to their condolences.

Then at last had come the day—the saddest day in the world to Yukiko—when her father would leave his home for the last time. She could close her eyes and see the throngs of people who came to burn incense before the casket and bow their respectful farewell to the Dead. According to her father's wish, the three-day funeral rites had been conducted by the Abbot of Koraiji Temple, the service being continued through the nights by relays of priests chanting prayers. The great drawing room had been half filled with floral offerings, besides which there were scores of gifts of cakes and candles, and squares of folded white paper containing money. The steward was obliged to have an assistant to help him list all the donors and their gifts, for in due time return gifts would be sent as thanks in the name of the departed.

Looking back now, these forty-nine days seemed to Yukiko like a dream—especially the hurried trip to the North to accompany her father's body to its last resting place in the cemetery of Koraiji Temple. It had been the more hurried because Minoru said it was necessary for him to get back to his business—that his work had already been too long interrupted.

After that there had been the memorial service every seventh day. Like beads of amber slipping along the black cord of a rosary, so Yukiko recalled these services and found in the recollection some solace for her sorrow. Although each time she felt that her father had gone still farther from her, yet she was beginning to wonder if it was not better so; better for him to have stepped out of his home while all was well; for these last two or three weeks she had become vaguely troubled about Minoru's business.

She found herself pondering again over his suggestion of economy in the housekeeping—a suggestion so out of keeping with his usual lavishness in the use of money. Of course, that was too small a thing to give one concern, as it was to be expected that fewer servants would be needed now; but a little later, when she suggested ordering some small lacquer cake plates in sets of five, made from her father's own design, and presenting them as a gift from him to his friends on the Forty-ninth Day, it had seemed to her that Minoru had been troubled rather than annoyed. He had replied that they had better leave such a memorial token for a later consideration; that he did not think it would be advisable to do it now; and he had added some remarks about "bear market" and "margins" and "business retrenchment," which she had not understood at all.

So she had looked over all her father's personal possessions and chosen some of them to give to the dozen or so most intimate friends who would attend the Forty-ninth Day service.

The shrine room was all in readiness. The black silk cushions arranged on the floor made an artistic contrast with the creamy mats, and the flowers were beautiful. How could anyone say, as Minoru had the night before, that it was a foolish, backsliding custom to make such a fuss over death commemorations. It made her heart hurt again to remember that her husband had said it was more up-to-date common sense to scatter flowers about for the living than to offer them to the dead. How she had ached to answer him! Yet she could think of no word of reply even when he had added that he wanted *his* flowers while he was alive to enjoy them, and had roughly asked what was the use of burning costly incense for one whose present existence nobody knows anything about.

She had felt the hot moisture crawling over her face.

"I *must* say something!" she thought. "If I protest, Minoru will have to listen. Surely he could not have meant such awful disrespect! If he has said it only to drive me to speech, I will give him an outspoken opinion."

She looked at him steadily.

"It is you who are foolish," she said quietly. "You are like a sailor who throws away his sails before he looks to see if he has any oars!"

Minoru had stared at her a few seconds, then, with an impatient exclamation, had gone out of the room and quickly out of the house.

Even now, at the recollection of Minoru's heartlessness, she felt the hot colour mounting to her cheeks. She dropped

down upon one of the cushions for a moment, her head bowed in shame for her husband.

"Honourable Father, please forgive him!" she whispered under her breath.

Then she felt better and went to get ready for the ceremony before the guests should arrive. On her way to her room she looked in to inquire after her mother's health, for that lady was in bed.

Nervous and high strung, Madam Toyama had given way to the strain of the past weeks. Her brow was furrowed, her full lips were drooping, and her dark eyes were shadowed by continuous headaches. When the doctor had recommended that she keep to her bed for a few days, she had held herself proudly and kept up as long as possible; but, little by little, Yukiko had unobtrusively taken into her own capable hands the endless details of the funeral preparations, and finally had coaxed her mother to obey the doctor and rest.

That was two weeks ago. Madam Toyama was still resting. That morning, when Yukiko had asked how she felt, at first she had turned her face away, but the next moment she looked around, and pulling her handkerchief from beneath her pillow she put it to her eyes.

"It is just too bad!" she said, "but I cannot possibly attend the Forty-ninth Day service, although I know how important it is."

This had given Yukiko a moment of utter loneliness. Had she not been conscious of the loyalty and sympathy

of the servants she would have been in despair. She knew that nothing in the world would keep *her* away from her father's memorial service, yet she would not allow herself to think that her father's wife could be indifferent, any more than she would acknowledge that her father's adopted son was ungrateful and unfilial.

Now, as she sat beside her mother, she pitied her; and with the pity there flowed into her heart a feeling of strength.

"Mother," she said gently, "Tokyo is pretty cold. Why don't you go for a few weeks to Miyanoshita?"

"How could I go there?" her mother said, looking at Yukiko reproachfully. "That is the last place I went with your father, and I should be thinking of him all the time if I went there."

She closed her eyes and turned her face away.

"Well, then—Atami!" said Yukiko patiently. "I am sure the change would do you good, and Atami is warm in winter, too."

The dark eyes opened slowly, and Madam Toyama looked gloomily at Yukiko.

"You had better ask Minoru," she said finally. "*I shall not.*"

Yukiko wondered what lay behind those last words, but her mother turned her head away with a finality that admitted no further questioning, so Yukiko merely said that she would take the first opportunity to do so.

Very thoughtfully she went down the hall to her own

room, and very thoughtfully she robed herself in her black crêpe ceremonial kimono. As she put in place a few straggling hairs which had separated themselves from the smooth pompadour of her Japanese coiffure, she suddenly remembered something her father had once said when he saw her lift her hand to her head in this same gesture.

"Yukiko"—it came back to her so clearly that she could actually hear the beloved tones of her father's voice—"you must never forget the old saying, 'The black tresses of a woman's hair have the strength of oxen.' Just so the slender threads of patience may twist into a cable of strength that will draw your husband to your heart. I want you to play the game—and win."

"Oh!" she said to herself. "Have I deserved his unfathomable love?"

She swallowed the lump in her throat; it would never do to cry now.

"O Honourable Father!" she whispered, "I will try to be your filial child in every way—yes, in every way. I will."

When Natsu came to announce the arrival of the guests Yukiko was ready and went at once to the small reception room where they were waiting. She was relieved to see that Minoru had already come in and was welcoming them. Meanwhile, the Abbot, with two younger priests, had arrived and been conducted to another reception room. After all had rested and been refreshed with clear green

tea, the guests were conducted to the shrine room, where they seated themselves on the cushions at the end of the room.

There was silence.

Then, slowly and impressively, the Abbot and his attendants entered and took their seats in front of the shrine.

In the dim room the brilliant scarlet and gold brocade of the Abbot's robe, offset by the pale lavender robes of the two priests, glowed and flashed like a winter sunset. And above the bowed head of the Abbot was the shrine, its open doors revealing the interior with its symbolic furnishings, all of gold, sparkling and gleaming in the light of the candles burning before the altar.

Yukiko's whole being thrilled to the mystic beauty of it all. Her eyes sought the new tablet of shining black with her father's death name written on it in letters of gold. There it stood in the very front of the shrine, just where the slender tendril of incense wavered and dissolved its fragrance in the air.

"Ah," she thought, "it may indeed be the entrance to that world beyond, to which my father has gone!"

The chanting ended all too soon, it seemed to her. Slowly, as if returning from a far country, her thoughts came back to her surroundings. Her eyes were still blinded with the glory they had seen, and her spirit was dizzy with the heights it had climbed.

She was vaguely disturbed by the alacrity with which

Minoru stood up when the last prayer was ended. Yet she was glad for the ease with which he conducted the priests and guests to the large reception room where the feast awaited them, the feast in which appeared no flesh of fish, fowl, or animal. Minoru, now no longer "Young Toyama," but with the full power of his father, gave his especial attention to the Abbot and priests, as they were the most honoured guests.

Naturally the talk turned on the late Mr. Toyama; and as the feast progressed, one after another related reminiscences of the departed. This was all very gratifying to Yukiko, but she could not help seeing that her husband was restless. She hoped no one else would notice it. Fortunately he had such polished manners that his restlessness would pass for nervousness. She really felt sorry for him, knowing how little he liked such a serene sort of entertainment.

At last the Abbot said that he must leave, as he wished to take a night train for home. So the maids brought in individual whitewood boxes of cakes, with a lotus blossom painted on the covers. Each guest received one of these boxes, as well as another in which to put the food he had not eaten, as they were expected to take home the delicacies remaining from the abundant feast.

After the guests had gone, Yukiko sat alone in her room. She looked out into the dusky garden, thinking with satisfaction of the day which was drawing to its close. It had been exceedingly strenuous, and she was tired,

but even her weariness gave her joy, for she had earned it by serving in her father's name.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of heavy footsteps. They halted outside her room. It was Minoru. With a feigned cough he pushed open the shoji.

Yukiko looked up questioningly.

He entered and seated himself on the purple silk cushion which Yukiko pushed toward him. This was his own cushion, always ready for him in his wife's room.

Yukiko wondered what had brought him to her room at this particular time; he had never sought her company very much, and of late he had come to her only when necessity demanded. She noticed that he was no longer wearing the ceremonial dress he had worn at the service. He had on his very best silk kimono and the pleated skirt which he always wore when he was going to some place that required sitting on the floor.

"May I give you some tea?" Yukiko asked, not knowing what else to say.

"Thank you. No, I won't have any tea just now," said Minoru amicably. "The truth is, I must go out to a meeting this evening. I tried hard to get out of going, but as it is a directors' council I am obliged to attend."

To this Yukiko replied evenly, "Of course our Newly Consecrated One will think that is all right. You know it was his lifelong practice to be faithful to his work."

"I am glad you don't mind. I—well, I'll go."

Minoru strode down the long hall, Yukiko meekly

following. She wondered if, perhaps, she ought to have urged him not to go; if, perhaps, she had believed him too readily, and he was not going to a directors' meeting, after all.

"Husband! Sometime I should like to talk over a plan to have our mother go to Atami; she needs a change," Yukiko ventured.

Minoru stopped.

"Well," he said hesitatingly, "sometime we will."

Then he went on to the entrance.

Two maids stood ready to see their master off. From the hand of one he snatched his soft felt hat, and from the hand of the other his gold-headed cane. He thrust his feet into the straps of his wooden clogs where they waited for him on the granite step of the covered driveway. He stopped long enough to light one of his favourite cigars, then disappeared in the luxurious depths of his limousine with the merest glance towards Yukiko and the bowing maids.

As Yukiko went back toward her room she could hear the light laughter of the maids, and although she could scarcely distinguish the words, she thought she heard one of them say to the other, "I hope he has a good time!" and the other one answer, "Do you suppose it is O Miyo San?"

CHAPTER XXI

"THE HERMIT"

MR. IKEDA was ushered into the Kojimas' apartment by a neat coloured maid who asked him to please be seated; that Mr. Kojima would be in presently.

He looked about the pleasant room, considering which of the comfortable chairs he should choose. It was several weeks since he had been here. Mr. Kojima had urged him repeatedly to come, but he had been deep in some research concerning the chemical basis of tobacco blending, and at such times as he had leisure the popular Mr. Kojima had been engaged. It was rather unusual to find him at home this evening, as it was Saturday, an evening rarely free from social engagements for Japanese business men in New York City, but Mr. Kojima had telephoned, "The card party at Van Doran's is called off, so I'll be home tonight. Won't you come over?" So Mr. Ikeda came.

Mr. Ikeda liked this apartment. It was the one place he visited. When he had first come to New York, he had been continually and cordially asked to various functions, but he had so constantly found excuse for not attending social affairs that finally he had been dubbed "that her-

mit" and left more or less to himself. But, although he took no active part in social affairs, he was nevertheless interested, in a quiet way, in all that went on around him.

Then he met Mr. Kojima, the manager of the Nippon Boeki Kwaisha, who, knowing nothing of Mr. Ikeda's love of seclusion, had invited him to his home on Morningside Drive. Mr. Ikeda accepted, somewhat to his own surprise, but Mr. Kojima had a way with him that forestalled refusal, and gradually the men became friends. Mr. Kojima's associates smiled as they watched this friendship ripen; and one of the government students at Columbia University, seeing them so frequently strolling together along Morningside Drive, had spoken of them as "Damon and Pythias." It was caught up at once, and soon everyone was calling the dashing business man "Pythias" and the grave young man "Damon."

Mr. Ikeda, waiting in the Kojima parlour, instead of seating himself, had walked over to a large window where he stood looking out over the park just opposite, and thinking how good it was, after all, to have friends in New York. Wonderful and fascinating though this great city was, he had found at times that it was fearful, too, in the way it could wrap its mantle of loneliness close about one's very soul. It would be especially so on a night like this if one had no friends, for the city was buried under a shroud of snow which gleamed white and cold in the brilliant moonlight.

“Snow is snow in every country,” he thought, “and it has a way of making totally different places look strangely alike.”

He was gazing down upon the snow-covered treetops and terraces, but he was not seeing Morningside Park of New York City. No, he was seeing the Toyama garden in far-away Japan as it had been one snowy night when he was a boy; and he was feeling a dead echo of the tingling hope of that past day that the snow would last through the morrow. It seemed so long ago! He wondered if it had really been himself who had rushed out into the garden before the sun should snatch away the treasure; who had worked with all his boyish strength to build a snow castle; who had waited with boyish eagerness for a certain little girl to come like a princess to approve his work.

“I miss the noise,” said a hearty voice behind him.

Mr. Ikeda turned around, startled. He had been so absorbed in memories that he had not heard his host enter.

“Yes?” he said with a questioning smile.

“I was speaking of the children. They are not only the treasure of one’s life, but sometimes rather a nuisance. When they make too much racket we are annoyed, but when they are gone we miss them.”

“I dare say they have been having a wonderful time in the snow today,” ventured Mr. Ikeda.

“Yes. We are fortunate in being near the park, where there are safe slopes for them to slide down,” replied

the host, extending a delicately engraved Japanese cigar box.

"Smoke?" he asked cordially.

Mr. Ikeda, feeling that it would be rude not to accept the hospitality, reluctantly helped himself to a cigar, but only to toy with it. Meanwhile his host sent a vigorous whirl of smoke into the air, laughing aloud as he did so.

"Do you know, my friend, I am forever forgetting that you are a non-smoker. I suppose that's because I enjoy a smoke so thoroughly myself—particularly after a meal. I often wonder how you have managed to keep from getting the habit. Really, I think you ought to smoke. You never do anything you think you ought not to, do you? But aren't you just a little inconsistent—and you in the tobacco business?"

"Probably that is the reason I don't smoke," replied Mr. Ikeda, entering into the bantering spirit of the conversation. "Don't you see? I want to leave all of our cigars for other people to buy. Turn them into cash is the idea. Our organization is always needing funds."

"Come, now! Isn't your company subsidized? I thought that tobacco in our country was a government monopoly."

"Well, you're both right and wrong. The monopoly bureau maintains several of our men for research and experiment, and our company supplies the bureau with raw materials and with the result of our investigations. On the other hand, we pay a high tax on every cigar we sell in Japan."

"Ah, yes! By the way, Ikeda," said the host, suddenly shifting the subject, "you haven't been in New York long, but even in these few years you have opened our eyes about Formosa. You have no idea what ignoramuses most of us are about that island."

"To have *you* confess such a thing delights me," replied Mr. Ikeda, smiling.

"We really ought to be more—a great deal more—interested in that part of the Empire," continued Mr. Kojima emphatically. "The things you told us in your address at the Nippon Club greatly surprised most of us."

"I was a little surprised myself that many of the gentlemen seemed to think that tobacco is the chief product of Formosa. The tobacco industry there is not nearly so important as camphor, sugar, or even tea. Tobacco is still in its infancy in Formosa."

"You said that giving work to the natives opened the way for educating and civilizing them; but those natives, now—I suppose it sounds absurd to ask such a question—are any of them head-hunters? Do you ever actually encounter any genuine head-hunters in your work?"

The younger man laughed.

"Oh, yes; I have many good friends among them," he said. "The truth is, those old head-hunters were nothing more nor less than brave knights in a kind of tournament, where, in accordance with their own code of honour, a successful youth might win a double prize—fame and perhaps a wife."

"Aw! Talk sense."

"I am. They are called 'Forest people' now, and head-hunting is legally abolished, although undoubtedly it still exists in some of the tribes. But they'll come through all right, Kojima—in time. They have some fine traits—those people. Why, in a few generations they will be as gentle as the descendants of our own doughty samurai."

"Hum-m-m, yes? What about uprisings?"

"The government keeps them under control."

"Is government intending to turn all those wild people into Japanese? I should think it would take a good bit of time."

"Ah! You have the wrong idea, Kojima. I'm afraid that I didn't make things clear. You see, head-hunters are not the only inhabitants of Formosa. They are the aborigines; but for the past few centuries emigrants from China have been pouring into the land. Not to conquer. They cared nothing for the people or the land—except for what they could get out of it."

"A pretty mess of a country we have over there! And you mean to go back to that place?"

"There is no question about that!" laughed Mr. Ikeda. "Probably I shall return this coming summer."

"Well, I would be willing to go over and rescue you from your absurd infatuation if it were not so terrifically hot there."

"Hot? You are thinking of the South. There the heat is unbearable sometimes. Even in the North—well, anyway,

I have thrown in my lot with Formosa and I mean to make that island my home."

"It must be quite a contrast to your early home. Didn't you tell me once that you came from the north of Japan?"

"My people—yes; but my own years there were few. I was brought up in Tokyo, and we seldom have a thoroughly good snowstorm there, you know. I was always longing for snow—an inherited longing, I suppose."

"It's unusual to have so much snow in New York as we are having just now. It's hard on the municipality. The papers say it will cost the city all of two million dollars to clean the streets."

"It's a blessing to the unemployed."

"Then let us hope the unemployed will get busy and remove it before it turns to slush!"

"I'm afraid your children would not agree with you. It looks as if they might have several days of coasting yet."

Mr. Ikeda pulled himself up from the cushions of his deep chair and walked over to the window.

"It's a cold white world outside," he said musingly; then stood silent, with his eyes gazing outward.

His host was watching him quizzically.

After a brief interval Mr. Ikeda slowly turned about and came back to his chair.

"Excuse me," he murmured, "I—well, somehow, this scene of unbroken snow on the hillsides of the park almost makes me homesick."

"Saa, saa, Friend Damon!" said Mr. Kojima teasingly, "don't you think that sounds a bit sentimental? But, then," he continued, the earnestness of his heart creeping into his voice, "it is a good sign. And now I am ready to make a speech which I have been intending to make for some time past."

He leaned forward in his chair and shook an emphatic finger at Mr. Ikeda.

"It's time for you to give up this boarding-house life. Your landlady may be kindly, motherly, ladylike, and all that; but a fellow needs companionship—needs—well, somebody around after a day of wearisome office work. It won't do at all for you to keep on leading this solitary boarding-house life. Ikeda, you listen to me! I want you to get married!"

Mr. Ikeda was stirred by his friend's earnestness. He sat silent for a full half-minute; then he spoke lightly.

"Thanks, my honourable senior," he said, "but you must acknowledge that one cannot get married without a partner."

"Eh! What's that? Why, friend, if you are willing to get married, *she* and *she* and many a *she* will be circling around you in no time."

"I cannot be a yoshi and take my wife's name," was Mr. Ikeda's unexpected reply.

"What put that into your head? That is only one case in a thousand."

"At one time I was to have become a yoshi," said Mr.

Ikeda; "but when I—— Well, it seemed hardly the thing that I wanted to do."

"And the girl couldn't take your name, I suppose?"

The bantering tone had gone from Mr. Kojima's voice and left it singularly gentle.

"She was an only daughter."

"Perhaps you were acquainted with the girl?"

He did not want to pry into the young man's affairs, but sometimes, he thought, it did people good to speak out frankly.

Mr. Ikeda nodded slowly.

"Yes, I see," said his friend.

Mr. Ikeda wondered how much he saw. It was true that Mr. Kojima's business ability called forth the young man's admiration, and he had a hearty liking for him, but he suspected that Mr. Kojima's ideas on the subject of matrimony were far from his own. He shrugged his shoulders as if to dismiss the question and absently picked up a photograph album from a low mahogany cabinet at his elbow. Idly he began turning the pages, but in a moment he paused abruptly and held the book up to get a better light.

"That is my wife's album," said Mr. Kojima. "She insists on keeping it in this room to entertain guests, although I tell her that is an old-fashioned idea."

"Was Mrs. Kojima a friend of Miss Toyama?" asked Mr. Ikeda.

"Miss Toyama—the daughter of the narikin Toyama?"

Why, yes, I believe she was. Her sister Fumiko was Miss Toyama's classmate, I believe. Why?"

"My mother was Mr. Toyama's housekeeper after his first wife died."

"Oh!" said Mr. Kojima, and waited to hear more, but seeing that the younger man went on turning the pages of the album without speaking, he reached over and helped himself to another cigar; then he too lapsed into silence.

The awkwardness of the situation was relieved by the entrance of Mrs. Kojima.

"Such a silent party!" she exclaimed. "Are you gentlemen absorbed in philosophical meditation?"

"Not exactly." Her husband spoke quickly, grateful for the opportunity to clear away the slight mist of constraint. "I was telling Ikeda that it is high time for him to be getting married and settled."

"Aha! And you quarrelled! I am sure of it! Think what I have lost by not coming in sooner!"

She settled herself in a comfortable chair, and smoothing the wine-coloured folds of her velvet gown over her knees, she looked toward Mr. Ikeda.

"I always enjoy your coming, Mr. Ikeda," she said. "My husband, even when quarrelsome"—she laughed—"is much more agreeable and talkative with you than with anybody else. As for your quarrel tonight——"

"Now, now, Hatsuko! Be careful what you say, or I must make you apologize for that word 'quarrel.'"

“Why, Husband, I was about to say that I agree with you!” replied Mrs. Kojima archly. “There is nothing better than a wedding—ever!”

Mr. Ikeda looked up and smiled. He thought how girlish her face looked above her pretty lace collar, and marvelled that she could be the mother of four children. Her coming in had made the whole room warmer and brighter.

“Nobody could disagree if all the ladies were like Mrs. Kojima,” he said.

“After such a compliment I feel as if I ought to apologize for something. Ah! I have it! I shall apologize for my neglect as a hostess. You see, the children had too good a time coasting today. They were so excited that it took them a long time to get to sleep.”

“They tried to get me out, but my armchair, with a newspaper and my cigar, were too attractive.”

“They didn’t really need you! Miss Chiba went coasting with them! You should have seen her! She was like a child herself.”

Mrs. Kojima, laughing and gesticulating, described the merry scene and ended by telling how they had made a huge snow Daruma, with eyes and nose of pieces of coal begged from the janitor.

“If you should judge by Miss Chiba’s enthusiasm, you would say that she was not more than ten years old.”

“Miss Chiba is my wife’s—well, sort of protégée, I suppose you might call her,” explained Mr. Kojima. “She

is the young woman through whom we have solved, partially, at least, the very serious problem of educating our children in a foreign country. Hist!"

His eyes turned quickly toward the door, and he held up a warning finger. "The shadow of a bird on the shoji! or, as they say in this country, 'Speak of an angel, and you hear the flutter of wings.'"

The door opened, and a pleasant-faced young woman appeared, bearing a large tray.

"Something nice? Just like you!" said Mrs. Kojima, hurrying to draw out a nest of tables so that each person might have one. Then, relieving the young woman of her burden, she turned to speak, but was interrupted by Mr. Kojima playfully waving his hand, to keep her silent.

"Miss Chiba, this is Mr. Ikeda," he said pompously. "He is the friend who is so daft on 'our brothers in Formosa.' And Mr. Ikeda, this is our valuable Miss Chiba, who so insists on our speaking English, for the sake of the children, that we are all of us in danger of forgetting how to speak Japanese."

After such an informal introduction there was nothing to do but laugh and feel friendly.

"I am glad we are both so well recommended," murmured Mr. Ikeda.

"I will not insist on your speaking English tonight," responded Miss Chiba, "since the children are not here to benefit by it,"

Then she turned to Mrs. Kojima with an air of apology.

"I wonder if perhaps this drink is too countrified to offer a guest. I thought, as it is such a snowy night, that a home-made winter drink might taste good."

"Well! Well! If it isn't amazake! This *is* a treat!" said Mr. Kojima, raising his cup appreciatively to the level of his forehead. "Where in all New York did you ever find it?"

"Oh, I saw an advertisement in the paper saying that Kuwayama's grocery had just received from Japan a supply of dried malted rice. That's the foundation of amazake."

"What's that, Miss Chiba? Malted rice? Ah, but I notice that you said it was *dry*." He looked at her with mock seriousness. "Now, which am I to believe? The dry part or the malted part? Is this drink some new propaganda for prohibition? or is it an original scheme to supply alcohol to friends with unlawful desires?"

"That man is a hopeless tease," said Mrs. Kojima to Mr. Ikeda. "But notice how neatly she parries his thrusts."

Mr. Ikeda found himself listening intently to the good-natured combat and half hoping that Miss Chiba would come off victor.

"Why, Mr. Kojima," she was saying, "of course it is *dry* when you buy it and *wet* when you drink it, but it has no alcohol at either time. He knows that, doesn't he?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Kojima.

"It is almost impossible to determine what he knows," replied Mrs. Kojima, laughing.

"Thank you, Hatsuko, for taking my part," said Mr. Kojima, "but I secretly believe that Miss Chiba is giving us alcohol in disguise."

"Then," spoke up Mr. Ikeda, "my mother must have been guilty of the same delightful deception. If she were here, I am sure she would take sides with Miss Chiba. Indeed, it wouldn't surprise me if she were making some amazake in Formosa this very minute!"

"In Formosa! No!" Mrs. Kojima was surprised.

"Yes, indeed! And instead of the several days it takes in cold countries, in Formosa it can be made in a few hours."

"Well, Miss Chiba," broke in Mr. Kojima, "then Formosa is quite ahead of you in brewery methods. You will be transferring your brewery to Formosa, I suppose?"

Miss Chiba laughed. "I wouldn't consider it unless you would promise to come and be my best customer."

"Thanks. I'd rather be your customer here and now," he said, extending his empty cup, for having no amazake cups in New York they had to use simple china teacups.

"Don't give my husband a second serving," said Mrs. Kojima. "Tonight he is behaving even worse than usual."

But Miss Chiba held out the tray for his cup and started for the kitchen, saying over her shoulder as she went, "That's the only way to keep them good-natured!"

"Imagine having amazake here!" said Mr. Ikeda. "It's just as if Tokyo were a suburb of New York!"

"When I remember the streams of American taxis

cruising the Tokyo streets, I feel like saying that New York has become a suburb of Tokyo."

"Who knows? Perhaps Taihoku will be added soon," suggested Mr. Kojima.

"Where is Taihoku?" asked his wife.

"I knew you would ask that, Hatsuko." He pretended disgust at her ignorance. "Wait; I'll ask the school teacher. Here she is. Miss Chiba, what is the capital of Formosa?"

She glanced from one to another, trying to determine the purport of the question. Then, assuming the severe manner ascribed to a school teacher, she turned to Mr. Kojima.

"Don't you know, Mr. Kojima?" she asked.

"Of course he does," interjected Mrs. Kojima.

"Then I needn't answer him, need I? And if he doesn't know, he ought to ask Mr. Ikeda, oughtn't he?"

"Help! Help! I am worsted!" cried Mr. Kojima, amidst the laughter of the others.

When, presently, Mr. Ikeda glanced at the little gilded clock on the mantel, he was surprised to see that it was long after ten o'clock.

"What a short evening this has been!" he exclaimed, getting to his feet. "I must leave!"

"You needn't be in a hurry," said his host. "You are not a frequent visitor. Do come again before you forget the way."

"Thanks. I will very soon. Truly I will," he added, as

Mr. Kojima sighed with a gesture of hopeless disbelief.

"Now, see that you do," said Mrs. Kojima. "And don't forget the date of the Japan Society dinner. You are to be at our table, Number Nine, no matter who else invites you. Don't forget! Table No. 9."

"Shall I tie a red thread to your finger to help you remember, Mr. Ikeda?" asked Miss Chiba.

"Much obliged. If I find myself forgetting, I will call upon you for your services."

With which remark Mr. Ikeda took his leave, feeling very warm and comfortable in his heart. Such pleasant people! Such a sensible, jolly girl!

CHAPTER XXII

TABLE NO. 9

MR. IKEDA surveyed himself in the glass above his dresser. His evening suit was not unbecoming, he reflected; and as looks go, he was, on the whole, at his best. Yet, as he selected one of his finest linen handkerchiefs and tucked it into his pocket, he was half sorry he had promised to attend the Japan Society dinner. All the noise and confusion, which most of the thirteen hundred guests would find agreeably exciting, would be to him both distasteful and boring.

Last year he had taken himself out of town on business; but this year Mr. and Mrs. Kojima had set aside every excuse he had offered.

"Oh, no doubt they are right!" he said to himself, rather grimly. "Kojima says that this is one of the important organizations for promoting friendship between the two countries. That's a fact, and that's why I joined the Japan Society. But this annual dinner which newspapers call 'one of the principal social events of the year, where the élite of Japanese society and the élite of New York society meet in friendship,' is a bore, and I'd like to back out——"

His thoughts went no farther, for suddenly he remembered Mrs. Kojima's saying that she counted on his coming, and if he refused, she would be left with a vacant chair at her table, and Miss Chiba, who was a newcomer, would be left without a partner.

He was getting into his overcoat when his landlady tapped at the door saying that Mr. Akita was calling.

As he went down in the elevator he was thinking what a happy arrangement it was that he should go with Mr. and Mrs. Akita to the dinner. He half suspected Mrs. Kojima of bringing this about, for although he and Mr. Akita were in apartments only a couple of blocks apart, they saw very little of each other, and he doubted if either would have thought of going to the dinner together. However, it was very pleasant.

Mr. Akita was waiting in the lobby, and a few minutes later they were at the taxi door. After Mr. Ikeda had greeted Mrs. Akita, he stepped in and took one of the spare seats facing her.

Mr. Akita insisted on his sitting on the back seat, but Mr. Ikeda would much rather sit where he was than crowd them or risk disarranging Mrs. Akita's beautiful garments. She wore Japanese dress, and even in the dim light of the taxi he could see well enough to make him conclude that she must have selected one of the most beautiful kimonos of her recently acquired bridal trousseau. It would have been rude to speak to a lady about her dress, but he smiled at her with admiration.

Mr. Akita seemed to sense his friend's unspoken thought.

"Japanese dress isn't bad for Japanese, is it?" he remarked. "To my notion, Japanese ladies appear at a disadvantage in Western dress. What do you say, Ikeda?"

Taken by surprise at his friend's direct question, Mr. Ikeda was embarrassed. He did not feel qualified to offer any opinion on women's clothing, especially when opposite him sat a bright-eyed young woman who always dressed as if she needed no suggestions whatever on that subject. So, as casually as he could, he replied, "As to the first half of your remark, I suppose it is so, naturally."

"This affair is the one occasion in New York," continued Mr. Akita, "when Japanese ladies feel perfectly satisfied to wear Japanese dress. I myself like it, but I know plenty of Japanese men who differ from me. They say, 'Why should our women wear Japanese dress at Japan Society dinners when all the rest of their lives abroad is lived in Western style? It's just making a show of themselves!' Many declare that any national dress worn in a foreign land at once ceases to be a dress and becomes a fancy costume. There is some truth in that, I admit; but as for me, I still maintain that Japanese women are made for Japanese dress, and it should be worn on all occasions when not painfully conspicuous."

"I suppose that even Mrs. Kojima will appear in a kimono tonight," suggested Mr. Ikeda.

"Yes, indeed! And it would not surprise me to see Mr.

Kojima in his haori and hakama. He would consider it a great lark. Theirs will be a jolly table. I am glad we are to be with them."

"I also," replied Mr. Ikeda. "And when I heard that you and Mrs. Akita were to be at Table No. 9, I was delighted. In spite of our being rather near neighbours, we are both so occupied with our own affairs that we never seem to have a chance to meet unless an evening of this sort brings us together. I am really ashamed of the way I neglect my friends. To tell the truth, I was ignorant of your return from Japan until you telephoned me about going tonight."

"That Japan trip was a hurried one," said Mr. Akita. "I had scarcely time to get there when I had to start back. My main object in going, as I suspect you know, was to get a certain 'treasure' which was waiting for me there." He glanced significantly at his wife.

"Then I suppose you had little time to see any of our old college chums?" asked Mr. Ikeda a little wistfully.

"Oh, I am quite reinforced with information about them," rejoined Mr. Akita, "for several of them came to our wedding reception."

"Why, Husband!" Mrs. Akita's gentle voice was heard for the first time. "I did not know that you and Mr. Ikeda were college chums; you never told me."

"You never asked me about it," he returned gaily.

"Yes," Mr. Ikeda explained. "We were together at the

Imperial University, but your husband was graduated and I was not. I left during my junior year."

Mr. Akita wondered if his friend's overconscientious explanation indicated only regret, or if it also covered some bitterness. He had never heard exactly why Mr. Ikeda had left so suddenly. He had said that he had a chance to get a government position in Formosa; but that sounded more like an excuse than a reason. It might be interesting to know, he thought.

"Now that we have come together again," said Mr. Akita, "you must come and spend an evening with us soon; then I will tell you all about Sato and Harada and Ohashi and half-a-dozen others. I met almost every one of our old friends. Why, I even saw some ladies—Mrs. Kojima's sister and young Mrs. Toyama were at our reception. I had seen Mrs. Toyama once before. Do you remember one afternoon when I had been studying with you at the Toyamas', and going home we peeped over the hedge and saw a lot of girls having a Tanabata party? You pointed her out to me. She was just a girl then, but now she is a very sedate matron."

"Her stepmother is to be married again," said Mrs. Akita.

"Hah!" exclaimed her husband. "I hadn't heard that. You see, Ikeda, news travels faster by the tongue wings of Tokyo society than by radio."

Mr. Ikeda would have liked to hear more, but just at that moment their taxi came to a stop in front of the

Hotel Astor. The uniformed page, as he opened the door of the car, could not restrain a glance of admiration as Mrs. Akita stepped out. Similar glances followed her as the party passed through the lobby, which was astir with activity, the usual liveliness being increased by the Japanese costumes seen flitting here and there. Many foreigners paused to watch with curiosity and pleased interest while two Japanese ladies met and stood as they deliberately bowed to each other. It was as if the donning of the Japanese dress called for the familiar greetings of the homeland. Although their movements were more hurried than they would be in Japan, still the little scene was graceful and picturesque—a pleasant incident in the rush and buzz of the busy lobby.

As the Akitas stepped out of the elevator and threaded their way toward the dressing rooms, Mr. Ikeda remarked that it was his first Japan Society dinner.

“What! You don’t mean that this is your first appearance here?” Mr. Akita’s surprise made his voice unexpectedly loud and clear. “That’s unworthy of you. You’ve been here three years, and haven’t you been told by your seniors that every Japanese of any standing in the city has a moral obligation to attend this dinner?”

Mr. Akita’s young wife, not yet used to her husband’s outspoken ways, caught up the corner of her sleeve, and held it to her lips half in amusement and half in embarrassment. Then she looked up and saw Mrs. Kojima coming. Feeling much relieved, she advanced to meet her;

for even in her short acquaintance with this lady, Mrs. Akita had learned that Mrs. Kojima had a way of always making people feel comfortable.

"How charming you look, Mrs. Akita," called Mrs. Kojima in her gay voice. "I'm so glad you wore Japanese dress." Then, turning to Mr. Akita, "I wonder if you will trust Mrs. Akita with me? I shall be only too happy to look after her while you gentlemen are checking your coats. You will find us at the entrance of the drawing room."

No sooner had they removed their wraps and made their way to the large room next the banquet hall than Mrs. Akita found herself the centre of a merry group of Japanese ladies, which was soon enlarged by the addition of a number of foreign ladies. Mrs. Akita was the latest comer from Japan; therefore many introductions took place, and the poor little lady was much confused by the strange foreign names.

"I have nothing to help me remember," she said to Mrs. Kojima in despair. "The names don't *mean* anything! Unless it's Mrs. Black, or Miss Grey, or Mrs. Young, or Mrs. Wood, I forget right away."

"But our names are nothing to yours!" exclaimed Miss Clarke, laughing. "Just think of 'Shirayamadani.'"

"That means 'White-mountain-valley,'" replied Mrs. Akita. "Our names all carry their meanings, and so they are more difficult to forget."

Just then Mrs. Robertson brought up Mr. and Mrs.

Johnson, and Mrs. Akita retired into silence, wishing heartily that she had had more practice in speaking English; her tongue seemed to move as if it were lame. But her manners were gentle and gracious, so she made friends at once, with only smiles and bows. However, she was very grateful when Mrs. Kojima turned to her with a few helpful words just as she was getting lost.

"Never mind, my dear little lady," Mrs. Robertson comforted her. "You will soon be chatting as fluently as Mrs. Kojima."

"Mrs. Akita has just come. She's our newest bride," volunteered Mrs. Omura, herself a bride of two years before.

"Then perhaps her lovely gown is her wedding dress?" queried Mrs. Johnson.

"One of them," replied Mrs. Omura.

"*One* of them!" exclaimed Miss Clarke. "Pray how many wedding dresses does a Japanese bride have?"

"Five, as a rule."

"Five! Dear me! I should be happy to have one," declared Miss Clarke, with such earnestness that everybody standing near laughed heartily.

"That is," she added quickly, "if it were anything as exquisite as this one."

Miss Clarke was not young, and her constant protestations of feminism were always a source of kindly joking among her friends; so her sputtering attempt to explain what she meant only made them laugh the more. Mrs.

Akita glanced from one to another, bewildered. She could not see why everyone was so amused, and finally, with a forced smile on her face, she turned to Mrs. Johnson with the remark, "English is very confusing outside of a book."

When there was a general movement in the room, and Mrs. Kojima whispered that it was time to go to the Banquet Hall, Mrs. Akita looked around a little anxiously, seeking her husband.

"Here we are, on the very dot!" sounded his hearty voice behind her, and in another moment they were again in a crowd of strangers, pouring through the wide doors of the great Banquet Hall. As soon as they entered, there, high against the wall, they saw draped two immense flags, American and Japanese. The folds were caught together in the centre and fastened by heavy tassels of purple—the royal colour of Japan.

"Oh, look!" cried Mrs. Akita. "Look! Never before in my life have I ever given a thought to international friendship; but now, so far away from home, it makes one feel pleasant and—and kind of safe!"

Her husband smiled and nodded, but as he turned his head away he looked rather grave, for he was thinking, "Not yet. There is a flaw in the heart of things. In the future—perhaps——"

Looking about her as they moved along, Mrs. Akita felt pleasantly at home. There were many familiar colours and shapes in the beautiful kimonos scattered here and

there, lighting up the general rather sombre appearance of the crowd. But they had a different effect on some. Many a Japanese man felt for a moment a curious longing tugging at his memory.

A throb of homesickness came to Mrs. Akita again when she caught sight of the zigzag of Japanese screens stretched along the back of the slightly raised platform, where stood the head table for officials and the guests of honour. How the dull gold of their unornamented panels gleamed! It reminded her of one of her farewell parties, a musical evening in Count Togata's private concert hall. Suddenly she found that her eyes were misty.

"Now this will never do!" she rebuked herself sharply. "Why, it is ridiculous for me to feel sad in this lively atmosphere."

While they were talking, Mr. Akita had been steadily piloting his wife in the direction of Table No. 9, which had been reserved for Mr. Kojima. They reached their places in advance of the others of the party and stood watching the hundreds of guests scattered singly and in groups, all moving toward their places in the big room.

"Pretty, isn't it?" said Mr. Akita.

"Oh, yes!" his wife answered. "Yes, it is much prettier than you told me it would be. Mrs. Kojima said her husband was worried about finding enough red and white carnations for the tables."

Mr. Akita laughed.

"Kojima thought it an honour to be asked to be on

the Decoration Committee, but he has paid a pretty price for his vainglory. However, that's all right. It takes brains as well as pocketbooks to get up an affair as big as this, and he was eager to do his share. It was a foreigner's idea to carry out the colour scheme of Japan's flag. How do you like the holders for the table numbers?"

"Why, I didn't notice that they are made of two half-open fans! Maa, how unfamiliar familiar things look when they are put to odd uses!"

"Yes, but just notice! An American flag is painted on one fan, and on the other a Japanese flag—each half open for 'ever widening mutual prosperity'; for, you know, that is what we want for both countries. And look over there—flags are everywhere tonight! Do you see those two—one America and one Japan—at the ends of the head table? The last thing before we sit down, the orchestra will strike up 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' and the American flag, by some electric device, will flutter as if in a breeze. The music melts into 'Kimigayo,' and the Japanese flag flutters. Then of course everybody claps, and the evening begins with a warm feeling of friendship in every heart."

"Oh, that is beautiful!" cried Mrs. Akita. "The two national songs! I wish they would sing the words! Everybody sing both songs! Someone with a grand voice could lead. That would be splendid!"

"Now, that's an idea!" said Mr. Akita thoughtfully. "It is worth thinking of. If every Japanese who comes

to New York would bring a 'pulling together' idea for the Japan Society, it might help to give us more a feeling of 'belonging.' That isn't a bad idea, Madam Newcomer."

While they were talking, other guests of their table had arrived, and the greetings and introductions were just over when the first notes of the orchestra sounded. All stood silent until the music was over; but "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "Kimigayo" with the fluttering flags had been inspiring, and at the close the hall echoed with the sound of clapping hands, which, however—in the practical American way—almost immediately merged into the rattling and scraping of moving chairs, as everybody reseated themselves for the coming feast.

Then it was discovered at Table No. 9 that there was one vacant place.

Perhaps that explained why Mrs. Kojima had kept turning her eyes so frequently toward the entrance, although she had not allowed her anxiety to interfere with her duties as a pleasant and gracious hostess.

In truth, Mrs. Kojima was both anxious and puzzled, for she had arranged with the most delicate finesse for Miss Chiba and Mr. Ikeda to be partners for the evening, and now she was wondering if her plan was going awry. Mr. Kojima, at the other end of the table, had not noticed his wife's uneasiness, but when he noticed the vacant chair, he, with his usual hearty complacency, said the very thing that his wife did not want him to say.

"Well, now, what can be the matter with Mr. Ikeda's lady? I wonder if she has run away!"

Mrs. Johnson's eyes glanced across Mr. Akita toward Mrs. Kojima.

"Mr. Ikeda's lady?" she whispered. "Miss Chiba?"

"Not yet," murmured Mrs. Kojima with a twinkle in her eye that quickly turned to sympathy as she observed Mr. Ikeda's embarrassed expression. How she wished that her husband was half as cautious in social matters as he was in business! Why couldn't he learn that Mr. Ikeda was not the kind of a person to take a joke, especially if it were turned against himself? Under the circumstances, however, there was nothing to do but accept the situation.

"She will probably be a little late," she added lightly. "She is to come with our neighbour, Mrs. Van Doran, and I suppose they have been detained in some way. I have not been home since noon, as I came here directly from Mrs. Conner's afternoon tea; but I'm sure there is nothing to worry about."

Her explanation set her husband at ease, but not herself. She wondered if Mrs. Van Doran had come. Between the hors d'œuvre and the soup she fumbled her booklet of the guests' names until she located the table assigned to Mr. and Mrs. Van Doran. No. 66. Now where could that be? The fans with the numbers had been removed when all the guests were seated, and she was beginning to feel a little uncertain what to do, when she was startled by the voice of a page close beside her.

"From Table 66, Madam," he said, extending a silver tray.

She took the note from it, and with an inconspicuous little bow which meant "Excuse me!" to all who noticed her, she opened the note.

"It seems to be from Miss Chiba," she said, glancing at Mrs. Johnson.

When she looked up from reading, her husband was watching her expectantly, so she sent the note down to him and turned to Mr. Akita.

"It's too bad to force you into family matters," she said, laughing, "but I want to tell Mrs. Johnson that Miss Chiba thinks my little girl seems croupy, so she feels she ought to stay with the child. It's nothing alarming, as Tomoko is apt to get hoarse with every change of weather. Of course, Miss Chiba wouldn't leave the child with a servant, but I'm sorry. I did so want her to come tonight!"

"Oh—Miss Chiba?" It was Mrs. Akita who spoke. "Miss Chiba is not coming? I am sorry. My husband has told me so much about her that I have been looking forward to meeting her this evening."

"How now, Mrs. Akita? You had better look out!" said Mr. Kojima teasingly. "That husband of yours is already too much of a lady's man, without any encouragement from you. But, then, I see you have found it out already."

Everybody laughed so merrily that Mr. Kojima did not

notice his wife looking at him with her "I-am-trying-hard-not-to-scold" expression.

Miss Clarke, who sat beyond Mr. Ikeda, asked him something about Formosa, and presently the two were launched into a discussion of the relative importance of that island and Korea as parts of the Japanese Empire. As others at their end of the table were drawn into the conversation, Mr. Ikeda became quite genial and enjoyed himself thoroughly. However, he was not so utterly absorbed that he failed to hear Miss Chiba's name mentioned several times at Mrs. Kojima's end of the table. It really would be pleasanter if Miss Chiba were here, he thought, although the evening was turning out altogether more agreeable than he had expected. To add to his pleasure, he discovered a number of friends at other tables, here and there, and exchanged bows with them.

At last the waiters in their trim black and white slowed their steps and finally ceased their weaving in and out around the tables. Then suddenly, as if pulled by a magic cord, everybody's attention turned to the head table on the platform.

"Which is the wife of the Japanese Ambassador?" asked Miss Clarke.

"The lady on the president's right," replied Mr. Kojima. "And that serious-looking navy officer wearing so many medals is our rear admiral."

"Ah, yes," said Professor Robertson. "I believe he has just concluded an important mission in Washington."

"Exactly. And he is returning to Japan shortly. He is one of the speakers this evening."

Further talk was prevented by the rising of the president. There was a few minutes' rustling of chairs being turned about, whispers being hushed, and the audience settling into a listening attitude. Then the president, after a few remarks of welcome to the audience, introduced the principal guest of the evening in a short, gracious, and wholly international speech.

The guest was a fine-looking, dignified Japanese gentleman, who, after the graceful, courteous greeting of old Japan, and also the inevitable kind reference to Commodore Perry, began his address. He spoke in excellent English and with eloquent earnestness on a very up-to-date, intellectual subject; and so clear were his ideas, so concise, so original, and so altogether admirable, that very few who heard him would ever forget the man or the address.

This honourable guest was followed by others whom the president, with wit and skill, introduced one after another. No address was either long or dull, and at the close several internationally renowned persons had been heard from in speeches on subjects of interest to both countries.

The programme came to its close. The speakers were thanked, the audience applauded, and the crowd began to scatter and move about.

"The admiral's address was fine," said Mr. Akita, "but he's a navy man. I don't agree with him about the——"

"On an occasion such as this"—a deep voice from a passer-by came almost as a reply to Mr. Akita—"it takes a master hand to arrange a programme to please everybody."

Mr. Akita, who had stopped abruptly at the first startlingly clear words of the speaker, laughed aloud.

"I'm unhorsed," he said, "and by an unknown foe. All that is left for me is to undo my helmet and acknowledge defeat. This is the final act of tonight's too-short programme."

And he sighed deeply, in apparent dejection.

Mrs. Johnson turned to Mrs. Kojima with merriment in her eyes.

"At least you and I are pleased," she said, and then added, very low, "that the programme was so short."

"I always am—when it is," replied Mrs. Kojima, "but especially tonight."

"Its short length seems to suit most of Table No. 9," laughed Mr. Akita, suddenly cheerful again. "Everybody seems to have found something to do. Ikeda has gone over to speak to one of his office men, who has his pretty sister standing beside him; Kojima and Dr. Pond are headed for us, and I'm being telegraphed for by my wife. I promised her the first dance. See you later!"

And off he went just as Mr. Kojima and an elderly gentleman approached.

"What's the next thing in our plans?" asked Mr. Kojima looking at his wife.

"We're praising the short programme," said Mrs. Johnson.

"Ah, yes; that answers the question. However fine the dinner speeches may be, the shorter the programme, the better it pleases you ladies."

"Oh, Husband!" reproved Mrs. Kojima, "that sounds as if we are so—so unintellectual."

"Not so! Not so! There are many other ladies than you two who come to these affairs for the express enjoyment they have in showing appreciation of the efforts of the orchestra in the next room."

"And quite right too," said the elderly man beside Mr. Kojima. "Often our programmes have the grievous fault of being long-drawn-out. Two of our speakers dropped out tonight, yet even so the programme was not too short. After a heavy dinner and an intellectual treat, we need recreation; and as Professor Johnson is dancing with my wife, I'm going to take Mrs. Johnson to see if the orchestra is keeping good time—and I'm counting on Mrs. Kojima for a dance later on."

"There, Husband!" Mrs. Kojima triumphantly exclaimed. "You always say Dr. Pond's judgment is good and his opinions worth while, and I am honoured that he agrees with me. However," she added seriously, looking at Dr. Pond, "though I am sorry to miss the dance with you, I must tell you that I am not going to stay tonight."

"Ah! Really, Hatsuko? What's up?" Mr. Kojima asked gravely.

"I know Tomoko is all right; it isn't that," said Mrs. Kojima. "But for Miss Chiba's sake, I think it is best to go. It will relieve her anxiety. And, anyway, I am leaving a much more attractive person in my place, younger and livelier."

She nodded toward Mrs. Akita, who was standing near the door beside her husband. A little flushed from dancing, she was looking very pretty and a little shy, but nevertheless quite equal to her expected duty as a substitute hostess.

"If you please, Mrs. Kojima," said Mr. Ikeda, who had joined the party in time to hear of Mrs. Kojima's change of plan, "I heard you insist that Mr. Kojima must remain with his guests; and as I do not dance, if you will allow me, I shall like to accompany you to your home."

"Why, yes, indeed. I will be very grateful," she replied.

And as they left the gay scene behind them, she thought to herself that perhaps it was not going to prove such an unsuccessful evening, after all.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DAY OF THE IRIS

WELL known to the people of New York City who lived in the neighbourhood of West Ninetieth Street was the Nippon Club. Hemmed in by larger buildings, more or less counterparts of each other, this one possessed an individuality which made it seem to stand alone. Although the architecture was American, there was something unique in the sloping roof, the overhanging eaves, and the goodly number of wide windows, which reminded one unmistakably of Japan. And yet there was nothing to arrest the notice of a passer-by, unless, perhaps, the weather-worn flag of the Rising Sun which hung modestly from a flagpole thrust out of a second-story window.

The individuality of this building lay not so much in its calm and foreign air as in the life which moved on within its walls. Here was the social centre for a thousand or so of Japanese people who were residents of the city and its environs. Here had been entertained celebrities from Japan; and here, at different times, several princes and princesses of the blood had spent some hours in making very happy a multitude of highly honoured hosts.

One especial day in each month some of the women or children of the neighbouring houses might be seen watching this building with interest. It was the day when the wives of the club members came from homes far and near for the regular meeting of the Japanese Women's Club. Mostly small of stature, their doll-like appearance lent itself to the imagination that they must be mysteriously different from other people. Although invariably dressed in American garments, yet there was in the mind of many an onlooker, "Who knows but what that dainty lady alighting from her car may be a baroness or a viscountess?"—and democratic Americans are the first to be interested in rank and title.

When the day of the May meeting arrived, the children of the neighbourhood were more curious and excited than ever before. Such mysterious boxes as were unloaded at the door! Such strangely shaped parcels as were carried in! But if the children could have gone inside they would have been entranced; for it was the fifth day of the fifth month, and preparations for the celebration of the Japanese Boy Festival had set the usually quiet place a-buzz with the patter of feet, the moving of chairs, the rustling of paper, and the gay chatter of many voices.

At the April meeting the ladies had decided to make their May gathering a vivid reminder of the homeland, and at the same time let it serve as a send-off for the popular Miss Chiba, who very shortly was to marry and return with her husband to the other side of the world.

Early in the morning of the important day, the clubhouse was alive with the festival atmosphere, as the enthusiasm of the committee had spread even to the clubhouse employees—Japanese young men, who saw in today's celebration a memory of their boyhood being materialized in a foreign land.

The first of the day's stream of automobiles arrived early, bringing Mrs. Kusano, the head of the committee in charge. As she entered the door, two of the clerks stepped out of the office dressed in Japanese ceremonial clothing and greeted her with the deep, formal bow of Japan. She was delighted, and expressed her approval with such enthusiasm that the young men felt quite repaid for their trouble.

"Splendid!" she cried. "Thank you. We never know who has Japanese clothes over here until there comes an occasion like this. Your pleated skirts and crest coats will give an air of dignity and reality most welcome. Thank you. Thank you very much."

"Mrs. Kita telephoned a few minutes ago," said one of the men. "She wished to know if you had come; so, if you will excuse me, I will let her know."

"If you will permit me," said the other, "I will take your wraps here, and you can go at once to inspect the iris garden. Mr. Ono helped us finish it late last night."

"Splendid!" she exclaimed again. "I'll go at once."

She was still standing in front of the beautiful miniature garden, most ingeniously arranged in an oblong

earthenware tray of some ten or twelve feet in length, when Mrs. Kita came hurrying in.

"Isn't it fortunate that I live near?" she said.

"I should say so!" agreed Mrs. Kusano. "And just look here! Isn't this a fine piece of work?"

She pointed to the garden.

"I'd like to hide behind that big screen and listen to the exclamations of everybody when they see this iris! It seems dreadful to have artificial flowers, but we can't get real ones now; and of course no flower but iris can express the spirit of the Boy's Festival."

"They are very beautiful," said Mrs. Kita. "I never saw anything more realistic. My children will be trying to pick them, if I don't watch carefully."

Mrs. Kita was a very dignified lady with a gentle voice, beside whom Mrs. Kusano seemed very energetic and forceful. Yet, strong contrast though they were, these two women were the best friends of any Japanese ladies in New York.

"Wasn't it nice in Miss Chiba to offer to take all the children to the park to play?" said Mrs. Kita in her quiet, pleasant way. "We'll have an uninterrupted morning here, and we can feel so safe, as she is with them."

"Yes, indeed! I always feel so easy when Taro and Tamako are with her."

Mrs. Kusano sighed, thinking how difficult it would be to find another governess so satisfactory for her lively children.

When the other members of the committee began to arrive, the exclamations of wonder and pleasure over the iris garden quite satisfied Mrs. Kusano, whose idea the garden was.

"Maa!—Iris!" cried one. "I thought it was too early in the season for iris!"

"Not for this kind," laughed Mrs. Kusano. "These plants have a permanent bloom!"

"Oh!" said the other, and she stooped over for a closer look.

"Be sure that jaunty little sailboat is tightly anchored," said someone on the opposite side. "If it's not, my little boy will have it out before I can get him away."

"I could stay here for an hour and enjoy every minute," said the youngest lady in the group.

"But we aren't going to let you spend your time sitting and enjoying, Mrs. Akita," called Mrs. Kusano from the door. "There is a table in the next room piled so high with work that we shall have nimble fingers if we get through by lunch time."

They all turned quickly and followed Mrs. Kusano to the large room behind the big standing screen, where presently they were gathered around a long table busily unwrapping parcels, examining souvenirs, and selecting and wrapping up toys to be given as prizes for the winners in the children's games.

"Wasn't it fortunate we found the paper flowers?" exclaimed Mrs. Kusano. "I wonder if there is anything

in the world that New York doesn't have in some form or another!"

"If we know where to look for it," replied Mrs. Kita.

"But I doubt if we could have found these paper fish, even in New York," said Mrs. Ono. "Where did they come from?"

"You surely couldn't have got them from Japan?" asked someone.

"No, there wasn't time enough after the last meeting."

"San Francisco?" asked Mrs. Akita.

"Yes. My husband thought it very likely that articles of this kind could be found in a Japanese wholesale store that supplies shops in small towns along the coast. After some trouble he found them, and I'm so happy that they came in time."

"More than one child will be pleased to receive such an unexpected souvenir," said Mrs. Kusano; and lifting high a short bamboo stick with a spray of iris fastened to it and a paper fish hanging from its end, she swung it gently to and fro. "Just see him swallow the air through his round ring of a mouth!"

"See him wriggle! He looks as if he were really swimming in the air," said Mrs. Akita. "It's almost like home—only on a small scale!"

And so the merry chat went on, and the deftly moving fingers never stopped until every prize and souvenir had been wrapped in white tissue paper and tied about with white and red ribbons. Their busy hands were just bring-

ing the work to an end when one of the house boys appeared in his white serving suit and reminded the ladies of the approach of noon.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mrs. Kita. "I didn't think it could be more than eleven o'clock."

"What a lot we have done!" cried Mrs. Kusano, beginning to gather up the neat packages and pile them on a shelf-cabinet.

"Many hands make light labour!" sang Mrs. Akita, helping her.

The table was emptied in a marvellously short time, only to be immediately refilled by the house boys setting before each lady a square lacquer tray of dainty Japanese food.

"Maa! If I were only on a cushion instead of a chair, I'd feel as if I were back in Tokyo this very minute," said Mrs. Akita, looking with glistening eyes at the blue-and-white dishes and gold lacquer bowls set forth on the black trays arranged on the long table.

"Yes, isn't it jolly to have a place like this right here in the heart of New York?" said Mrs. Kusano. "I like living here, but there is one thing that is spoiling my happiness even now, and I'm afraid it will be a constant heartache for days to come."

"Why, what can it be?" asked someone, and every pair of eyes turned toward Mrs. Kusano.

"It's this marriage of Miss Chiba's," she said with an exaggerated sigh. "I—do—not—approve!"

"Dear me! Why not?" a timid voice murmured somewhere.

Mrs. Kita laughed, and several looked at her, some with surprise, and some as if asking what was the joke.

"I suppose I may as well explain," she said, "since Mrs. Kusano and I have the same selfish reason."

Now everybody was very interested. In magic unison each laid her chopsticks along the front edge of her luncheon tray and listened. What might they not hear?

"We mothers who are far from the homeland all have the common problem of our children's Japanese education," said Mrs. Kita. "Now Miss Chiba has solved that problem for two of us to a considerable extent; but now that she is going away, Mrs. Kusano and I are plunged into the same problem again."

She looked toward her friend.

"You have said it exactly!" agreed Mrs. Kusano dolefully.

The timid lady spoke again in a hesitating, confidential tone, as if she wished her words to be protected from too much publicity.

"I—I—thought you were going to say something about Miss Chiba—about her past, you know. I have a friend who is very intimate with her, and when I asked her why Miss Chiba had never married, she answered in such a way that I just knew there must be something in her past."

"Disillusion in love, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Kita.

"She certainly doesn't either look or act broken-hearted," said Mrs. Kusano.

"I don't know exactly. My friend wouldn't tell me," half whispered the same gossipy voice.

Then Mrs. Akita spoke up briskly. Her cheeks were red, and she talked fast.

"I can tell you about it, for my husband is Mr. Ikeda's friend, and knows that he was engaged to marry a millionaire's daughter but broke it off because he didn't wish to give up his own name. Then the millionaire adopted a young man from a titled family to become the daughter's husband. And that young man had been engaged to Miss Chiba but gave her up to marry the millionaire's daughter. They had a very grand wedding, which my older sister attended, and so did Mrs. Kojima's sister, who was a schoolmate of the bride. And from all accounts I think Miss Chiba is mighty lucky not to have married him."

"Well!" said Mrs. Kusano. "If that's all there is to it, it's much better to know the truth than to imagine all sorts of things. 'Put things out in the open and half the time they lose their bad odour.' So I say."

"And," said Mrs. Kita, "it seems the case this time is very rare, for Mr. Ikeda and Miss Chiba are so well suited to one another. Such a wonderful union is only made by the gods and Buddhas!"

"Of course, I agree to that," Mrs. Kusano interrupted. "But," she sighed and gazed absently at a bit of mush-

room held lightly between the ends of her chopsticks, "my children simply adore her, and I don't know what I *shall* do after she has gone—I really don't!"

A new voice spoke.

"I think it is wonderful of Mrs. Kojima to have taken such an interest in her. No real sister could have done any more."

"But, then, that is just like Mrs. Kojima! Ladies, do you know what I told her? Well, I told her I was sorry my Tamako was only seven years old instead of seventeen so that she could be go-between for my daughter too."

When the ripple of laughter had subsided, she continued. "But really I am in earnest—grave earnest. We are all in the same boat. Our husbands, most of them, are business men, and that keeps us in foreign countries year after year. The woman is lucky whose husband gets transferred to the home office while the children are small. Of course, we don't want to go. We all like it here, but it's a loss to children to spend time on things they have to forget when they start to school after we go back to Japan. Mr. Kusano laughs at me and says a samurai of the modern world gives his life to his business and expects his family to be with him no less than in those old days."

The group about the table had become somewhat serious, and for a few moments no one spoke. Then a quiet elderly lady, who had so far taken no part in the con-

versation, lifted her head and looked around the table.

"Mrs. Kusano has spoken for us all," she said. Then she hesitated, but seeing sympathy in the many black eyes turned upon her, she continued.

"Whether we say it or not, we mothers think the same. But for me the problem is vital. You ladies and your family live in this alien land, yet the business of your husbands is such that your interests as well as your associations are more or less closely connected with the homeland. Most of you are here for only three, or at most, six, years. With me the case is entirely different. My husband's life work is here, and our children look forward to a future in America."

Mrs. Kusano was sorry enough that she had brought up the subject, for she knew, as did most of the others, of the unfortunate engagement of this lady's daughter to an American young man. Unfortunate because it had been broken off so tragically. The charming and intelligent girl had gone through four years of college in the same class as the young man. During their last year they had become engaged, and the date of the wedding was set for the summer following graduation. The parents on both sides were perfectly satisfied, and everything seemed to be going happily, when suddenly the engagement came to an end by the wish of the young man. His excuse was that his classmates were making life unbearable for him because he was going to marry an Oriental.

However hurt the girl may have been, she was too proud to show it, but the sunshine seemed gradually to fade out of her life, and she is now a pleasant, serious woman, devoted to, and successful in, her literary work.

"Yes," the elderly lady went on, "we belong to both countries, and we belong to neither; and after spending thirty years in this 'land of liberty,' I have come to the conclusion that it will take several more generations before the proposition that 'all men are created equal' is carried out in its true meaning. My husband says that universal brotherhood in the political and intellectual worlds is almost here—but in the social world it is a long way off."

"I thought all of your children are American citizens," said a young woman in a care-free manner.

"Yes, they were all born in the United States," the elderly lady replied, "and were educated here; but that doesn't alter the matter in the least. In reality, it makes it the more complicated."

She was loosely folding her paper napkin to lay upon her tray, so evidently the conversation was ended.

"Ladies! Can you guess what time it is?" said Mrs. Kusano suddenly; and, feeling that she must do something to ease the strain, she began to pour for her neighbours, right and left, the clear amber tea which the waiters had brought in for the finishing.

"I think I hear Mrs. Kojima's voice," said Mrs. Akita,

rising, "so, if you will please excuse me, I would like to see her before the children get here."

She stood up and started in the direction of the big standing screen, followed irregularly by the others, until presently all had left the table and gone to their appointed posts. There they stood, ready to welcome the guests who were beginning to arrive, and soon the rooms were filled with lively chatter and gay laughter. Some of the guests spent their time watching the children at their games; others drifted hither and thither in groups of twos and threes, some lingered as guards to the children gathered about the booths, where cakes, candies, and Japanese dainties were spread out invitingly. Above was a big red-and-white sign.

HELP YOURSELF!
TAKE ONLY TWO,
BUT COME AGAIN.

Whenever the clapping of the two wooden blocks for the Japanese theatre sounded, then would come a pattering rush down the stairs leading to the orchestra gallery, to see the historical tableaux and listen to the players of Japanese instruments, whose kind efforts gave such an illusion of reality to the scenes.

However, that which attracted the greatest attention was the model of a Japanese room in an ordinary home. It was perfect to the smallest detail. On the floor were

close-fitted, block-bordered mats and the square silk cushions to sit upon, a beautiful six-panel screen of dull gold, and a tea cabinet with tray and cups. The outer wall was of dainty sliding doors of paper-covered lattice opening upon a narrow porch, beyond which could be seen a fairly good made-up garden of dwarf trees and flowers in pots.

But there was nothing made up *inside* the room; there all was genuine. The tokonoma had a very artistic post of polished wood that looked like the trunk of a storm-twisted tree mysteriously embedded in a film of ice; and the picture on the kakemono was a typical one for Boy Festival Day. It was a bunch of white and purple iris, loosely tied with a few blades of water-weed, and lying across a warrior's quiver filled with arrows.

On the polished platform, was arranged a complete miniature set of famous heroes of olden time, of warriors and attendants, with horses and armour and banners—all constructed with a perfection of detail rarely seen in modern days.

"Mamma, lift me up so I can see inside," pleaded the shrill voice of Mrs. Kusano's small son.

"I'm taller 'n you are," spoke up little Tadao Kojima. "I can see a round fire box with chopsticks sticking out of the top."

"Huh! I can see a leopard skin on the floor," said another child.

"Well, now you can all see," said Mrs. Kusano, picking

up the smallest boy and holding him in the crook of her arm.

"Oh! I want those arrows and the bow to shoot them with. Can't I have them?" asked one little fellow, looking at Miss Chiba, who was in charge of the exhibit.

"I want the drum and the shell trumpet and a spear and a banner!" chimed in Tadao.

"Mamma, can't I have the pretty fish on the end of the stick?"

"Not that one," said Mrs. Kusano. "These things are for everybody to see. But I think somebody will give you one to take home. And if you will try to be as brave," she added, thinking it a good time to teach a lesson, "in things you have to do as that big fish, you'll grow to be a brave man. That fish is so brave that he tries to swim right up a waterfall. Can you be brave like that?"

"Sure!" answered both boys promptly.

"Miss Chiba," asked a larger boy, "what are all those little men seated in a circle?"

Recognizing the boy as one who had spent all his life in America, Miss Chiba explained that the group of figures represented a feudal lord and his attendants making plans for an attack on the enemy. She pointed out, also, the little suit so perfectly made of red-and-black lacquered armour, the ornamented helmet, and the odd, bag-like shoes with fur around the top.

"This is exactly the armour real soldiers used to wear," she told the boy, "and they all belong in that black

lacquer box which has the large crest in gold on the front. It's the exact copy of a general's armour box that was used several hundred years ago."

"Where did all these things come from?" asked the lad curiously.

"They were loaned by the Brooklyn Museum."

"Hum! I know where that is," he said. "I've seen it many times, but I've never been inside. I live in Brooklyn."

"You must visit there sometime. There are many Japanese things there."

"I will. I want to go now," said the boy.

Presently he pointed to a tiny lacquer fan with a design of the sun rising brilliantly from rainbow-coloured waves.

"What's that?" he asked.

"It's a war fan," Miss Chiba answered. A long time ago the general of an army would carry a fan like this and wave and signal with it to the men following him.

"You like all these little things, don't you?" he said, noticing the caressing tone of her voice as she talked about the exhibit.

She laughed.

"You're a very keen boy! Yes, I like them; and don't you know that all Japanese women, young and old, like small models of real things? Ask your mother, she will tell you so, too."

"My mother says this is just exactly a real room in Japan, only everything is smaller here. You see," he said

confidingly, "I don't know much about these things"—indicating the whole of Japan by a sweep of his hand—"because I was born in America."

"I'm sorry," said Miss Chiba kindly.

"Oh—I'm not!" replied the boy, bristling proudly. "I'm glad I'm an American. But—" and his voice trailed off wistfully—"once in a while I wish I was a Japanese too."

"Here is a boy caught between two civilizations," thought Miss Chiba. She turned to him earnestly.

"You must think of yourself as a bridge," she said, "and you must let the best of each country go across you to the other country."

He looked at her steadily for a moment.

"Thank you," he said, "I'll speak to my mother about it," and turned away.

By and by the crowd began growing less. The successful afternoon was drawing to its close, and mothers were gathering their children to take them home.

Mrs. Kita came in, looking as prim as possible, considering that Mrs. Kusano had linked arms with her and was chattering volubly while piloting her past the few remaining guests.

"You can leave your post now, Miss Chiba," called Mrs. Kusano. "The committee is gathering in the small side room for a cup of tea. Don't you think you'd better come?"

"No; I must stay and look after packing up this exhibit."

"But Mrs. Kojima has promised to show us something beautiful."

"Yes, I know; but I'll stay here a while longer."

"Oh," said Mrs. Kita. "I suspect you know what it is."

"Yes," Miss Chiba said with a smile, "I think I do. We were at the dressmaker's just before we came here, and Mrs. Kojima insisted on having everything that was finished sent over so you could all see."

"Mrs. Kojima is quite right," rejoined Mrs. Kusano. "You belong to all of us, and so of course we want to see your trousseau."

"Thank you," said Miss Chiba. "Everybody has been so good to me, it will be hard for me to leave New York. Sometimes I don't see how I can go away."

"Nor I," replied Mrs. Kita with a smile.

"Nor I," echoed Mrs. Kusano with a sigh.

They started for the tea room, Miss Chiba gazing after them with a look of deep affection.

The ladies found the committee at tea, and presently Mrs. Kusano's merry voice was blending with the general hum and buzz of pleasant chatter, while Mrs. Kita joined Mrs. Kojima and Mrs. Akita, who had left their places and were opening some large boxes on a side table.

"Isn't that adorable!" exclaimed Mrs. Akita; and immediately the ladies left their teacups and flocked over to the table with the boxes.

"Let me see!" called Mrs. Kusano, and peeping over somebody's shoulder she also voiced her delight in the

two little boy suits with their gold buttons sparkling against the gleaming white satin.

"My two little boys are to be the attendants, and little Tamako the flower girl," exclaimed Mrs. Kojima. "You would think it was their own wedding, the way they insist on being in everything. I suppose even the baby would want to be something if she were old enough to claim Miss Chiba as her 'auntie.'"

"Do show us the flower girl's frock," begged young Mrs. Ono.

"Please! Please!" they all chorused.

From the white box at her side Mrs. Kojima drew out a little dress, all lace and ruffles.

"Oh, how perfectly darling!" exclaimed one.

"Little Tamako will look like a fairy in it," declared another.

"And the bride?" asked Mrs. Kita.

"Oh, white satin, of course; regulation bride's veil with real orange blossoms. She is so practical that she insists on its being quite simple. It's not finished yet. Here are the undergarments."

"I suppose it's to be a church wedding, since she is a Christian?"

"No, both she and Mr. Ikeda wish it to be a simple home affair."

"Well, I can only say to your face what I said behind your back a few hours ago; which is, that when I think of the loss it will be to us mothers here in New York, I—

do—not—approve!” Mrs. Kusano’s tones were so doleful that everybody laughed.

“You couldn’t have bestowed on Miss Chiba a higher compliment,” said Mrs. Kojima, beginning to return the little dress and suits to their boxes, “and I shall take the first opportunity to repeat it to her.”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE WISE MEN OF MATSUBARA

NOTWITHSTANDING the steady invasion of modern ideas which had finally reached Matsubara, the thrifty little town still held on to some age-old customs. One of these was that of the retirement from business of the father of a family when his heir, who of course was a son, had grown to a suitable age and possessed ability to shoulder his father's responsibilities. This custom was observed in Matsubara just as it had been for hundreds of years.

This retirement was an occasion of pride for both parties. The father felt that he was blessed in having a son capable of relieving him from duties too hard for his later years; and the son considered that, in his new position of authority, his filial piety would be recognized by the townspeople, and he be given full honour as the new master of his family. By the time of the father's retirement the young master was, as a rule, married and ready to start into his life work of carrying on the business inherited from his ancestors, along with the family's trade-mark on the shop curtain.

That was very well for the young people, but sometimes

these retired old masters were still too vigorous and full of spirit to be content to spend their time dozing beside the fire box or fumbling a long-stemmed pipe. And finding too much unoccupied time on their hands, it was natural that often their experienced eyes would notice some neglected duty or something which they themselves would have done better than the young people. Then, if they could not resist a word of disapproval—and often they did not—it would cause a cloud in the family atmosphere. The grandmothers always retired with their husbands, but there was plenty of work for them in the home; for they were happy in looking after the wee ones, crooning and joggling them to sleep on the back, cosily cuddled in the folds of a warmly padded, flowered kimono; or taking stitches in tiny garments, and at nightfall, the grandmothers were the ones to lead the little ones into the wonderful story-land of “the olden, olden time.”

This was the fate of the old people in many towns, but in Matsubara the retired masters did not resign themselves to a fault-finding, envious old age. Instead they had put their wise heads together and called a meeting.

“Let us have a club!” said one.

“Aye!” said another, “and let us admit only retired masters.”

“To have a club is well,” said a third, “for by that means we can keep in contact with all these new ideas and new ways which are sweeping over everything.”

"Yes," said the first. "And then we shall be able to advise the young folk when problems come up. It is our privilege as well as our duty to advise."

The younger men smiled approvingly, one of them remarking that their town might be old-fashioned in some ways, but with even the old masters forming a club of modern fashion, no one need fear that Matsubara would be left behind the world in any matter of importance.

. So, while the young masters were busily engaged in their daily occupations, the elders, with time on their hands, were more and more called upon to take part in enterprises of general welfare. In political campaigns there were no back seats for these old men. There were prominent places for them in every gathering, and their views were listened to with respect. In the Matsubara Young Men's Association, and even in the Matsubara Maidens' Association, the voice of the elders was always welcome.

When there were no public affairs to demand their attention, the elders did not find themselves at a loss for something to do. In their club were many expert players of the ancient and honourable game of "Go," a kind of chess; and those who did not care to join in a game themselves found pleasure in watching others.

On a certain afternoon the club members were gathered in the roomy home of Mr. Tanaka. He was a favourite host, for always, at his home, the guests had the comfort

of feeling perfectly free to do or not do, to talk or to keep silent, as they preferred.

When the informal, cordial greetings of the old men were over, and a half-hour or so had been spent in a jolly exchange of jokes, anecdotes, and small items of interest, a number of them settled down, two by two, at the Go tables, while groups of spectators, eagerly watching, gathered around each battle ground.

For some time not a sound was heard in the room except the "patch-patch" of the small flat stones being placed upon the low block-tables. Slowly, one by one, the games came to an end, until one battling table was left. Around this gathered a crowd of watchers. There was a short time of skilled and careful playing, then suddenly:

"Patch!" and a black stone was dropped into a strategic place.

"Oh!" breathed the watching group delightedly.

A few moments more, then:

"Patch!" and a white stone was dropped into a place of vantage.

"Ah!" breathed the watchers, leaning eagerly forward.

"Patch! Patch-patch!—Patch!" The game suddenly ended.

Then came congratulations and explanations and discussions, in the midst of which the host clapped his hands, a slow three times, which brought in response a plump little maid with trays of tea and cakes. Soon the room

was in bloom with the gaiety of the party. While the guests settled in groups around the charcoal brazier, sipping tea or smoking, conversation became general and gradually drifted into topics of the day.

"Have you heard," said one, "that the young master of the Chiba family is in town?"

"Chiba? *Young* master, did you say? Ha-ha-ha!" exclaimed an old man, patting his thinly covered pate with his bony hand. "He is almost as old as myself!" and in order to be sure that his statement was correct he began counting off the years by bending his fingers one by one. "Yes," he concluded, "I am sure I am right. Why, he ought to be invited into our club. Maa! Maa! I suppose we were all young masters once. Ha-ha-ha!"

"I have heard that he is here," replied Mr. Kuno, shaking his frost-crowned head gravely from side to side, "but I am not sure that we shall want him in our club. I have heard a rumour that he is a servant of the foreigners."

"Not a servant. Excuse me! He was a teacher in the Kirishitan College," a voice interrupted.

"Well, I can't see how he could help being the foreigner's servant if he was employed to teach in the foreigner's Christian college. It's sad—too sad for words. But I am glad his dignified father was spared seeing his only son thus humiliate himself!" The frost-crowned head wagged disapprovingly again.

"But, really, you cannot say he was the foreigner's

servant!” another gray-head indignantly took up the argument. “I know all the circumstances. The foreigner was a learned teacher who first made himself a pupil of Ken Chiba to study Chinese Classics; for, as you know, Chiba San is as well versed in the Classics as his honourable father was before him.”

“To my way of thinking,” said Mr. Tanaka mildly, “there should not be any disgrace attached to going into a profession for a livelihood.”

“After all, we sometimes have to put aside our sentiment for necessity,” added another elder. “And Ken Chiba is only one of many high-class youths whose education, acquired during the changing period when Japan was emerging from the old days, was quite unpractical for the new world in which they have had to live.”

“And,” interrupted the one who “knew all the circumstances,” “there is no one who has felt himself more of a life failure than Ken Chiba. When I went up to Tokyo five years ago I called on him, having been his boyhood friend. I have no wish to tell you in what a small, miserable house he was living; yet he invited me in with such haughty sensitiveness that I could do nothing but ignore his poverty completely.”

Seeing that the men around him were interested, Mr. Ehara went on with his tale, speaking very earnestly.

“He asked many questions about Matsubara, and I could see that he was longing for news of the old place; so I suggested that he come back. Can you think how

astonished I was when I saw that my suggestion made him angry? He pounded on his table and vowed that he never would face the people of this town where his family had been so highly esteemed—never, until he could do so without bringing embarrassment upon the spirit of his ancestors.”

By this time all the elders were listening intently.

“Then Chiba San told me,” the speaker continued, “that the foreigner who was studying with him had asked him to enter the Christian school as a regular teacher of Chinese Classics. He said that he was greatly tempted to do so, as he would then be able to give his son a better education. I strongly advised him to take the position; and he answered that for himself he was content to be buried beneath the fallen and trampled leaves of Japan’s fine old civilization, but he felt that it was hardly right to take the budding young soul of his son down with him.”

“Well, well,” said Mr. Tanaka, “I for one am glad to hear the rights of this matter; we have heard so many rumours. Why have you never told us before, Ehara San?”

“I was sick when I first came back from Tokyo, and—oh, I suppose the subject never happened to come up.”

“What did he have to say about that young sister of his?” asked the disapproving gray-head. “I’ve heard that she became a ‘moga,’ and finally went to America.”

“‘Moga’?” piped up a quavering voice. “What’s a ‘moga’?”

Several of the men laughed.

“Oh,” said Mr. Tanaka, who had studied English more than the other men, “that’s some new international slang that’s sprung up lately. ‘Mo’ is for ‘modern’ and ‘ga’ is for ‘girl’; ‘moga’ is ‘modern girl’; but I doubt if Miss Chiba is as wild as the word implies.”

“You are quite right,” agreed Mr. Ehara. “Miss Chiba, being nearly two decades younger than her brother, had a much more practical education. I did not meet her, but Ken Chiba told me that just as he is a child of the autumn moonlight night, so she is a child of the bright spring noonday. He said he found it hard to understand her sometimes, especially when she preferred teaching in a city school to marrying someone he had in mind for her.”

“He must have found it hard to manage her. I heard that she wouldn’t live in his home after she began teaching,” said one.

“How gossip flies!” murmured Mr. Tanaka under his breath.

“Oh, as to that!” exclaimed Mr. Ehara. “Her brother gave her permission to live in the teachers’ dormitory; and he told me that the parents of one of her pupils were going to America and had invited Miss Chiba to go with them as a governess.”

“So that’s how she happened to go to America!” said the oldest of the elders, taking off his spectacles and

polishing them carefully on his sleeve while he thought over the things he had been hearing. He would have a good bit to tell to his sick wife tonight on his return home, and he must be sure to have his information exact. Sliding the bows of his spectacles across the tops of his ears, he peered at Mr. Ehara.

"And what has become of the—er—'moga' now? Is she still in America?"

"Hear Uncle Niino trying to talk slang!" cried one.

"Ah! Haven't you heard?" exclaimed Mr. Ehara. "She was married to Masao Ikeda. And would you believe it, his mother is a woman of this very clan! They met in America, and now they are on their way to Formosa, where Masao has a government position."

"To think of your knowing all about it," said Uncle Niino admiringly.

Mr. Ehara laughed and smoothed his untrimmed beard modestly. "The truth is, last evening, when I was taking my usual stroll along the river bank, I came upon Ken Chiba sitting under a willow, so we fell into conversation."

"And what really brings him back to Matsubara? Does he mean to stay?" asked Mr. Tanaka.

"I gather that when he came he didn't intend to stay. It was some business in relation to his property in the temple cemetery that brought him back; but he says that his son Jirō is going with his sister and brother-in-law to Formosa, so it may be that he will settle down here."

"I know a few things about that temple cemetery," broke in Mr. Kuno, again shaking his head disapprovingly. "There on the Chiba plot, that Tokyo narikin Toyama erected a stone with the inscription 'The Tomb of Toyama Family for Generations'! Think of it! The way a narikin gets everything he wants! It's scandalous!"

The continued head-shaking indicated that the speaker had little use for mushroom-millionaires.

"But the Chiba plot was neglected and run down; and Toyama Sama has made it over into a fine little park of which our town may well be proud."

"That may be," argued the other. "But I hold that the rest place of our ancestors is sacred, and it is a sacrilege to move them from the spot where they have lain for generations. For my part, I am glad that I am not affiliated with Koraiji Temple, even though it is three hundred years old and the oldest temple in our town!"

"One cannot choose his temple," said the host quickly. "That's decided by his birth. But it seems to me that since Chiba San has agreed to the transaction it must have been satisfactory."

Uncle Niino gave a meditative pull at the thin little tuft that sprouted from his chin. There was something else he wished to know. He was a Koraiji Temple adherent, and he had heard of a mystery which he wished someone would explain.

"Ehara San," he said, "I have heard that a spirit comes to the cemetery every evening at dusk and pours

holy water over the stone in the Chiba grave plot; and once my grandchildren saw the spirit, and—well, they were so frightened that they have never played in the cemetery since.”

“Now I feel that I must say a word,” spoke up an elder who until now had not entered into the conversation at all.

He was known as the quietest man in the town, and everybody said it was because his wife’s tongue was so busy with chatting—although it was kind and harmless chatter, as everybody knew—that the husband had grown into the habit of keeping silent. This being so, when he did speak, his words were listened to with interest.

“Perhaps some of you know that my wife in her girlhood served in the Chiba family,” he went on. “Well, I beg your excuse if it sounds proud—she is one of the most faithful souls left in these modern days. She believes firmly that whatever kind deed is done in the name of the dead is accepted by Buddha and will benefit the dead; so she has never failed, through all the years since the Chiba family went away from this town, to go on the twenty-sixth of each month to pay respect to the grave of her former kind mistress. Whether in sunshine, rain, or snow, she has gone to pour the crystal water over the tombstone, to pull the weeds with her own hands, to do whatever there is need to do in the Chiba plot. Well, about a year ago she began noticing that when she went in the morning there was frequently something to show

that someone had already been there, and finally she concluded that the plot was being cared for by someone besides herself. She asked around, but no one seemed to know, so she concluded that Buddha must have sent a good spirit to do it."

"Yes, that is what I heard," broke in Uncle Niino, "that the cemetery was haunted by a spirit who took care of the Chiba plot!"

"Please tell us more," requested Mr. Ehara, thinking that there might be something which Ken Chiba ought to know.

"Saa!" the elder with the faithful wife continued. "Saa! There is something you may say was an accident; anyhow, it happened a few months ago that my wife's cousin came over from the city for a visit; and it was on the twenty-sixth that she went back home. My wife was busy all day with sending her off, so it was evening before she was able to go to the cemetery. There was quite a mist, and she was well inside the gate before she noticed a woman in a gray dress stooping over as if to pull a weed from between the close-fitted stones that cover the ground. My wife could not help giving a gasp of surprise, and the gray-robed person stood up and turned toward her, and she saw that it was a priestess—a young and remarkably beautiful priestess. My wife says that she was so astonished that she just stood and stared at her, without a word. Then the priestess smiled pleasantly at her, and she said, 'I think I met you several years ago,

by the well. You drew some water for me. I had come to visit Koraiji Temple with my father,' she said. Then my wife remembered her. It was young Mrs. Toyama!"

"Young Mrs. Toyama!" exclaimed several.

"Surely not the daughter of the narikin!" cried Mr. Kuno, so astonished that for once he forgot his usual dubious shake of the head.

"It surely was none other!"

"But——"

"Yes, it was she. Even though you are an adherent of another temple, surely you must have heard of her ordination as a priestess of Koraiji."

"Maa! Maa! Maa!" quavered Uncle Miino. "To think of a priestess pulling weeds in the Chiba plot!"

"And as her devotion has become known, the services at the temple have drawn more and more people to attend," concluded the silent man.

"Go-n-g! Go-n-g! Go-n-g!"

The deep tones of a temple bell broke in upon the conversation. Farther away another bell sounded its deep "Go-n-g! Go-n-g!" Farther and farther came the sounds of other bells. The temples were reminding their world of the approach of evening.

One by one the elders stood up and took their leave. Uncle Niino, being somewhat lame, was the last one to step down into his wooden clogs.

"It's been a great meeting we've had with you today, Mr. Tanaka!" he said. "A great meeting! And I've a good

bit of news to take home to my old wife, lying flat on her back and waiting for me. Yes, a bit of news!"

"Make the most of it, Uncle Niino," laughed Mr. Tanaka, "for, as the saying goes, 'Gossip has life for only seventy-five days.'"

CHAPTER XXV

A CALL ON THE ABBOT

ONE quiet afternoon the Abbot had a visitor. After the usual greetings were over, and host and guest had finished sipping the tea brought by a small boy-priest, real conversation was begun by the Abbot.

"I am honoured to have you call, Chiba Sama," he said, "and I want to offer humble apologies for my delayed reply to your letter. To soften my negligence," he added with a wry smile, "I will confess that at first I was so thoroughly puzzled by your request that I felt myself unable to make a definite reply."

"Why so? I cannot understand."

The guest looked up in genuine surprise. He was a man of dignified presence, with an intelligent, refined face and the shoulder stoop of a student. His manners were courteous, but he was rather carelessly dressed and evidently had given no thought to the impression his appearance might make upon others.

The Abbot hesitated a moment before replying; then, in a low tone, half-explaining, half-apologizing, he went on.

"Perhaps I had better say to you, Chiba Sama, that,

after all, I am only an entrusted keeper of the ancestral graves of my parishioners. They are all people whose confidence I esteem and whose opinions I feel it my duty to—ah—not act against.”

“So you had to have their sanction—as it were,” said Mr. Chiba, with a slow smile.

“Yes, that is about the substance of it,” replied the Abbot; “although, to be frank, I acknowledge that I myself was somewhat surprised at your wishing to consult with me about having a Buddhist service for the spirits of your ancestors. It seemed somewhat inconsistent, as you had renounced your ancestors’ faith.”

The Abbot glanced inquiringly at his guest.

“Not at all,” quietly responded Mr. Chiba. “The service is not for me, but for my ancestors, who were all Buddhists and died in that faith.”

“Ah—so!” softly exclaimed the Abbot. “Ah . . .”

With a slight bow, as of acknowledgment, he went on, slowly and thoughtfully,

“I think the townspeople did not quite understand. To them, reverence for ancestors is a vital thing. They consider it, as even you, Chiba Sama, know it is, the foundation of the nation; and to renounce it is treason to everything holy, back through the ages, to the very beginning of the gods of the Universe.”

The Abbot looked at Mr. Chiba, who replied quietly, “I understand.”

“When word came to the town that you, the head of

one of our oldest and most honoured families, had renounced the faith so long held precious by your ancestors, the townspeople, shocked and deeply hurt, maintained that you were a heretic, and no heretic should be allowed to hold a service in Koraiji—the temple of the faithful.”

There was a moment's silence, then Mr. Chiba spoke very slowly.

“Honourable Abbot,” he said, “I am grateful for the trouble you have taken for me.”

He pushed his cushion aside and prepared to bow farewell.

“Ah! But do not conclude so quickly that it is wholly impossible to grant your request,” exclaimed the Abbot hurriedly. “I was too abrupt. Please rest easy for a moment. We must speak of this.”

He went on more slowly.

“Of course, with every step I take I need the coöperation and sympathy of my parishioners, but I am more liberal than many of them, and since seeing you I am concluding to take the responsibility of doing a singular thing.”

“You mean that you can arrange it?”

Mr. Chiba spoke with an eagerness he seldom allowed himself to show.

“It has not yet been officially decided,” said the Abbot gravely; “nevertheless, I will promise that it shall be arranged. On the day, two tens from today, as you requested, the service will be held in Koraiji Temple.”

"For this I am very grateful," said Mr. Chiba, with a deep bow. "My sister, who has been several years in America, is on her way to Japan with her husband. His official post is in Formosa, and they are to take my son with them when they go on to their home. For this reason I am anxious to have this service, which to our family is an important memorial, celebrated in the temple of our ancestors while my son and my sister are here. It also happens that Koraiji Cemetery holds the ancestral graves of the family of Mr. Ikeda—my sister's husband—and it will be happy for us all to be together."

"Ah, yes! That will be a pleasant occasion. Gladly I will meet Mr. Ikeda. His mother paid a visit here some five or six years ago, before she went to join her son in Formosa. The townspeople gave her a pleasant farewell, as this was her former home."

"That was a kindly thing to do—like old-fashioned days," said Mr. Chiba.

The Abbot looked up quickly.

"Ah, Chiba Sama, you have been separated from your townspeople for many years, and you do not realize that the old-fashioned days still live. The kindly spirit of the past has never changed."

Then, slowly settling himself more comfortably upon his cushion, he went on:

"If you will allow me, I would like to tell you something of Matsubara. The people here were always simple and kindly, and are so still. Few of them have had the oppor-

tunity of knowing the outside world, as has been the fate of yourself and myself. And so the greatest pride and happiness of most of them consists in being lovingly loyal to our old families, one in which they have taken great pride being the Chiba family. When the news reached the town that the head of this honoured family had deserted the religion which for so long had been held precious by his ancestors, the entire town was alive with interest, and the old people were filled with consternation. Many came to me greatly troubled. Of course, absurd and ignorant things were said, but, I assure you, every word was prompted by hurt and loyal hearts.

“‘What will become of the Chiba ancestral tablet?’ was asked in genuine distress. ‘What will Chiba Sama do about it?’

“‘Is he going to trample on it and thus declare to the world his loyalty to the new, foreign religion?’ asked others.

“‘What is he going to do with his ancestors’ graves in Koraiji Cemetery?’ was asked over and over again by troubled neighbours.”

The Abbot was too kind to repeat the many anxious allusions to the disturbed rest places of the dead, and the exchange of the large historical Chiba burial ground for the very small new plot in the overgrown and neglected part of the cemetery. Instead, he led the conversation gradually along the line of innocent and odd characteristics, and then to general town topics; drifting finally

into the more familiar and safe channels of ideas and opinions. They talked long and of many things—pleasantly, earnestly, thoughtfully—and when finally the Abbot saw Mr. Chiba glance at the little clock on the tokonoma, he, with a slight embarrassment, begged the liberty of asking if his caller would be willing to explain how he, so old-fashioned and strictly trained, had happened to become a Christian.

“You will not understand,” Mr. Chiba replied with his slow smile. “But—” he hesitated a moment—“perhaps you will.”

After a moment he went on thoughtfully, “It is a little difficult for me to explain, as it came about step by step—and almost unconsciously to myself.”

It was curious how Mr. Chiba changed his voice, and even his position, as he began to talk. He straightened his shoulders, and holding his head erect, placed his hands flat upon his knees in the dignified position of an old samurai speaking on a subject of great import.

“It is a universal law,” he said slowly and earnestly, “that unlikes attract. So was it when I met the Reverend Amos Brown, a missionary and school principal. We fell into conversation, and at once found ourselves upon a platform of mutual understanding. We became friends. That was an odd happening, for he was vigorous and full of plans and action, while I was a worthless bookworm with odd ideas, few words, and a life unpractical to the extreme.”

"But there must have been some worth in both, that a thread of congeniality could draw you two together," said the Abbot.

Mr. Chiba slowly shook his head from side to side.

"At any rate," he went on in a low voice, "he understood me. And being a man of practical ideas, he one day suggested to me that my tightly shut-up knowledge of Chinese Classics, if rightly directed, might prove of wide usefulness. He thought that by going myself to classes, instead of teaching pupils one at a time in my home, I would reach more young men, and also that the influence of contact and exchange of ideas would be an inspiration to both teacher and pupils. That started me to thinking along practical lines—I believe for the first time in my dreamy life—and suddenly I seemed to wake up. The Reverend Amos Brown was one of the few foreign teachers in Japan who believed that the study of Chinese Classics is as important in Japanese education as Latin is to English literature; and being a man of influence, this suggestion of his finally resulted in my being welcomed into his school as a teacher. There we came to know each other still better, and the silent influence of his cheerful, unselfish, useful life won me over to greater respect, closer friendship, and in time to a real belief that the religion which he sincerely lived was worthy of study and thought. Also, I recalled the bravery and patience of my young sister, whose life, after she became a Christian,

I had at first looked upon with surprise, then admiration, and finally respect."

Mr. Chiba turned his earnest face toward the Abbot, adding in a gentle voice, "The deep spiritual value of my belief you can understand better than could a Westerner, but its practical effect upon my life you cannot understand. I have found a religion which helps people to live in the present life. That is just what I have always needed. Now I am—satisfied."

The Abbot had listened intently, his keen eyes fixed on his caller's face. At the final words, his gaze held a perplexed, almost an amused look.

"And the service for the ancestors?" he asked quickly. "Is it only filial duty that causes you to observe ceremonies in which they believed?"

Mr. Chiba eased from his rigid position and looked with curious earnestness at the Abbot.

"My reverence for my ancestors is an inheritance which has never lessened," he said. "As a Buddhist I believed that the 'Mass for the Dead' is a religious service for the redemption of sins committed by them in their life on Earth, or else to help them upward toward a higher plane in the 'wheel of karma-transmigration.' Now I look upon the service as simply a tribute of my profound esteem and gratitude to my ancestors—who were all Buddhists. I believe the practical benefit of the service is to their posterity, who are led by the serious service to thoughtfully contemplate the lives of their ancestors. This arouses

anew the ambition to live up to the hopes of those who lived and worked for us, and whose belief was the highest and best they knew."

Mr. Chiba smiled.

"I am a poor person to give an intelligent reason for only a feeling," he said. "My words may sound childish to your deep mind; but I assure you, Honourable Abbot, my new religion holds an appeal to the most intellectual, and also it is a belief of noble living and of cheerful, busy, hopeful *comfort*—with no dread or fear of the unknown."

"We will talk again," said the Abbot bravely. "I hope that you are planning to stay a long time in Matsubara."

"Honourable Abbot," said Mr. Chiba, half laughing, half serious, "strange things happen in this world. You know the homely saying, 'Even a cracked dish, if kept three years, becomes useful.'" He laughed again. "So it has proved in my case. Mr. Tanaka, as perhaps you know, thinks that modern young men are too lacking in old-time culture; so he and a few other well-to-do gentlemen have decided to open a select school for the sons of their friends. They have offered me the position of tutor in Chinese Classics. I shall accept; so I hope to retire here, where I can brush my ancestors' graves with my own bamboo broom."

"Well, well! I shall be the first student to enroll, for I am sure I need to review my fading knowledge of Chinese poetry. Certainly Matsubara has a right to claim you, and I am sincerely glad."

"Thank you. I hope that you will always be glad."

They sat silent a moment, those two men—the one a Christian, yet sympathetic with narrow, conservative views; the other a Buddhist priest, yet tolerant in judging strange beliefs, and liberal in practising many modern ideas.

There came to their ears the sound of high, sweet voices chanting the evening service.

Mr. Chiba bowed abruptly to his host.

"Honourable Abbot, pardon me!" he said. "I have so enjoyed this talk with you that I have not realized how much of your time I have been taking. When you make the plans for the service, please call for me whenever you are ready to see me again. I am most grateful for your kindness."

As he walked away in the twilight the Abbot gazed after him thoughtfully.

"There is nothing so stimulating to the intellect as an exchange of ideas with a friendly enemy," he said to himself. "I am very glad that he is to remain in Matsubara."

And how did the Abbot keep his promise to Mr. Chiba? How untangle the sorrowful knot into which fate had twisted the simple, loyal minds of the people of the town?

The day after his unusual call and its following all-night meditation—deep and cautious and prayerful—the Abbot attended a meeting of "The Pillars of the Temple"—a group of intelligent and influential men interested in the upkeep and welfare of Koraiji Temple. There, in an

informal talk, he told of his conversation with the present master of the Chiba family. He acknowledged that although some of the ideas Chiba Sama had in his head were a little peculiar, yet he was loyal in his heart. To him the graves of his ancestors were sacred, and the service he had requested was for the Chiba ancestors—all of whom had lived and died Buddhists—and for all of whom their descendant, Chiba Sama, had the utmost reverence in spirit and respect in thought and act.

The townspeople had wholly misunderstood Chiba Sama, the Abbot declared. He himself considered him a fine and worthy man, and he considered it an honour to the town that the present master of one of their oldest families should wish to return to his old home to spend his last days among the descendants of the forefathers who for generations had been friends of his own forefathers. "Remember," said the Abbot, "that the Chiba family is one of the oldest in the town, and that the head of the Chiba family, before the Restoration, held the position of the substitute of Takesu, the daimio himself, whenever he was absent in Yedo Capital by order of the Shogun. I feel that it would be a great pity to the town to allow the service held for the ancestors whose graves have rested in Koraiji Cemetery for three hundred years to be held elsewhere than in Koraiji—the temple of the Chiba family for centuries."

All this—and more—the Abbot said; and, as usual, the Abbot won his way.

CHAPTER XXVI

BACK HOME

WHEN a wireless from the coming ship announced the arrival of the Ikedas, even calm Ken Chiba was inwardly excited, although his return message of welcome was very stiff and formal. He did one unusual act of courtesy, however. Although he had already moved to Matsubara, he sent his son Jiro to Yokohama to meet the party at the pier, even taking him from school for the purpose.

The Ikedas spent several days in Tokyo before going to Matsubara. First of all, Masao had to make an official report of his work abroad to the Department of Colonization, under which his Formosa duties were listed, and also there had been arranged by his old friends a welcome gathering for the bridal couple. This was very elaborate and more important than the usual bridal reception, as it had been a matter of concern to many of Masao's Tokyo friends that he had remained so long unmarried—for in Japan, people think that everyone must marry. This custom originated in the ages-old idea that as the Japanese nation exists because of its unbroken line, for twenty-six centuries, of Father-and-Son emperors, so the duty of every Japanese is to make a home—thus adding

another atom of loyalty to the nation, and at the same time perpetuating everlasting life to his own family. This is a sincere and almost universal belief throughout the land; therefore, with every enthusiastic congratulation expressed by the friends of Masao and Kotoko was mingled a genuine and kindly sigh of relief.

As soon as the very delightful reception was over, the Ikedas went at once to Matsubara in obedience to the old, old custom practised for centuries by every Japanese, of, immediately on return from an absence from home, making a call of respect to the memorial shrine of the ancestors.

When His Majesty the Crown Prince Hirohito made his trip abroad it was an act without precedent, as no Emperor had ever before left the shores of Japan. The people were very anxious as to the result of this daring act, but as, on his return, the first thing he did was to make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Sun Goddess—the earliest ancestor of the Imperial Family—the anxiety of the people was changed to rejoicing, and ever since they have felt that Japan may safely have a part in the world progress, as long as she holds fast her national customs of loyalty and honour.

Thus did Masao and Kotoko Ikeda; and as the graves of both families chanced to be in the Koraiji Cemetery, their dutiful visits were happily combined.

Early autumn in the Northern land is an ideal season, and the three—for Jiro was returning with his uncle and

aunt—had planned for a quiet, pleasant family visit just among themselves, talking of the events of their separated years, and wandering happily among the almost unchanged surroundings of their childhood. But it seemed that newsy ears had been listening, and Matsubara held a surprise for them.

As the train from Tokyo neared the station it slowed down and came to a stop with a series of bumps and jerks.

Jiro threw up a window.

“Akabo! Akabo!” he called, and the next moment was handing out the suitcases through the window to the Redcap reaching up from the platform outside.

Meanwhile Kotoko was peering through the windows as she followed Masao down the long aisle to the door.

“It’s so early in the morning, I wonder if we shall find anyone at the station,” said Masao.

“Honourable Father will be there, I know,” exclaimed Jiro, right behind them. “I wonder if he will recognize you at the first look!” and he glanced admiringly at his uncle and aunt, whose foreign dress seemed to him like pictures in a fashion magazine.

When they stepped down upon the platform they were all astonished. Not only was Ken Chiba there, but several pleasantly smiling strangers crowded around, insisting on helping with the baggage. The akabo was ahead with the suitcases, but Masao’s overcoat, which he carried over his arm, was taken from him, as also was Kotoko’s small

bag and umbrella. Smiling and thanking everybody, Ken led the way. As they passed through the ticket gate they found themselves in the midst of a score or more of the townspeople, all bowing and smiling a cordial welcome.

As Jiro ran to call jinrikishas, Kotoko had her first chance to introduce her husband to her brother. They had never met before, and now there was no opportunity for more than a word, when Masao found himself facing a reporter, who, bowing and handing out his name card, very politely begged an interview for his paper.

Mr. Ikeda answered the reporter's questions briefly, in an unassuming, straightforward manner, cutting short the conversation as much as possible. Meanwhile Kotoko, sitting high in her jinrikisha, had become the centre of a group of women. They modestly stood back a little, all gently and politely smiling a welcome; but all evidently curious about her foreign dress and hat. All were strangers, but Kotoko laughed and chatted pleasantly until, much to her relief, her brother's jinrikisha started. Masao's followed; her own fell into line with Jiro directly behind, and off the little procession rolled toward Ken Chiba's small, newly rented home.

Through narrow streets they went, lined on either side with simple shops, and it was not long until they entered a plain residential neighbourhood. Kotoko sat up very straight and looked eagerly about her. Her mind was a mixture of keen interest, half-forgotten memories, and an excitement which she could hardly explain to herself.

She had not been here since she was fifteen years old, but everything looked familiar—except for an occasional glimpse of what seemed intrusive newness here and there.

Presently the jinrikishas went more slowly; then, nearing each other, they stopped in a half circle before a low, simple fence of growing bamboo, with a rustic gate having posts of weather-beaten natural tree trunks. Beyond could be seen the top of a tall, scraggly tree with clinging reddish leaves of persimmon and a few balls of fruit, not yet ripened. On the other side were modest autumn flowers scattered in an unkept garden, and between ran a narrow unmade path leading to the door of a low brown-tiled house, with wide eaves sheltering a porch on which the shoji doors stood welcomingly wide open.

Instantly Kotoko's mind flew back to the Tokyo home of her brother, with its tinkling bell and broken plaster wall, and she bowed her head in gratitude that he had come to Matsubara. She felt that this little home was exactly what she wanted it to be.

They walked up the path, Ken leading. At the door he stopped, and turning apologetically to Masao, he made a deep, graceful bow.

"Masao San," he said, "perhaps you will permit me to refer to my seeming rudeness in entertaining you in this humble dwelling. I realize that after your long sojourn in America, you will find only very crude and far from comfortable accommodation, but as this is my first welcome to you and Kotoko, I feel that I like to have the

honour of entertaining you in my own home—though so simple and plain.”

“Not rudeness, but kindness and courtesy,” replied Masao, bowing with slow and formal politeness. “I consider it a privilege and an honour to be welcomed by you under your own roof.”

Then both Masao and Kotoko were bowed in with the dignity and formality of a samurai welcoming his guests. The ceremony of a few generations ago, which in its present-day setting looks grotesque to a foreigner, has scarred itself deeply into the hearts of the people. Its unforgotten marks may be seen every day, even now, and its courteous earnestness can never be doubted by those who understand.

While the jinrikishas were rolling along the streets there had been no opportunity for conversation, but when the travellers found themselves seated on cushions in the big best room, with little lacquer tables before each one, everybody's tongue was loosened, and they began chattering—so Ken said—like women at a neighbourhood well, or sparrows in a bamboo grove. Everything was simple, but the air held a homey sense of cheeriness and peace.

“Honourable Brother,” said Kotoko, as they were beginning to eat, “I am so glad that——”

She suddenly stopped and sat staring into her rice bowl, the cover of which she had just lifted.

“Maa! Maa! I haven't seen chestnut rice like this for

years and years! And to think you remembered all this time how very much I always liked it! I feel as if I'd been taken back to the beautiful days of the olden, olden time!"

Ken laughed, and clapped his hands for the maid.

"Yes, Sister," he said. "And doesn't it taste exactly like that you used to cry for as a little girl?"

In the midst of merry remarks at Kotoko's expense there came in from the kitchen, in response to Ken's handclap, a woman of fifty or thereabout, who immediately on entering sank to the floor in the deep, formal bow of an old-fashioned, well trained servant. No sooner had she lifted her head than Kotoko saw her face and gave a startled little gasp.

"Baya!" she exclaimed. "Can it be my old Baya? Oh, Honourable Brother, I *am* surprised!" Then, with a little choking laugh, she added, "No wonder the chestnut rice looks exactly as it did years ago!"

"Maa, maa, O Jo Sama!" exclaimed Baya, bowing again and again. "You have grown to be a grand, elegant lady!"

"No, no, Baya!" Ken laughingly protested. "She is no longer 'O Jo Sama.' She is a married lady now. You must treat her with dignity."

"Yes, yes!" Baya murmured. "I must be careful. I will bring more chestnut rice at once!" and she hurried out to the kitchen.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come to Matsubara!" said

Kotoko, her eyes shining. "With a garden to work in, and Baya to care for you, I have nothing more to ask!"

The little excitement presently drifted into talk of the trip, and Masao asked how there happened to be so many people at the station.

"Is it usual, nowadays?" asked Kotoko.

"No, indeed!" replied Ken. "I was as much surprised as you were. But I suspect it is the work of our good Abbot. He is kind and well meaning always, but he has a way of turning every opportunity into publicity for his temple work. I shouldn't wonder if you see something in tomorrow's newspaper about distinguished visitors coming on a pilgrimage to Koraiji Temple. The Abbot has great influence with the townspeople, and he likes to keep them interested. Besides," he added slowly, as he glanced at Kotoko, "the townspeople here hold our family in great regard as being one of the oldest, and I think the Abbot wants you to feel welcome."

"That is kind and beautiful!" said Kotoko impulsively, as she turned toward her husband. "I'm glad we both belong here. It makes me think of what Baya used to say when something she was anxiously working over in the kitchen unexpectedly came out all right. 'It's as if the honourable gods could taste and smell and they made it end just right.' Oh, Honourable Brother, I'm so glad you've come *back home!*"

"Second childhood, as it were," said Ken, laughing. Then he added seriously, "Childhood feelings return to

us in old age. As children, we are selfish, always asking and expecting. In youth, we are vigorous and ambitious, and it is easy to endure hardship; but in later life, it is pleasant to want comforts, or even a little luxury. It is well for you young people to go out into the bustling world to find your happiness; but for me, the home of my childhood is a good place. As long as I can be useful I will be content. I shall retire here."

"You are too young to retire, Honourable Brother," said Masao.

"Oh, no one must think that Honourable Father is going to sit down and do nothing!" broke in Jiro earnestly. "I have never known him to be so busy as he is now. Besides his teaching, he and Mr. Tanaka have an important piece of writing that they are doing."

He looked at his father as if to say, "I knew you wouldn't mention it—and so I had to!"

Kotoko and Masao wanted to know all about it at once, but Ken said that it could wait another day; for the travellers had had a long night's ride, and they must rest before the memorial service of the afternoon.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FLEETING DREAM

THE sun was halfway down the western sky when Ken Chiba, his son by his side, and followed by Masao and Kotoko Ikeda, entered the dim silence of the temple. They walked up the broad aisle between the relatives and friends seated in long, straight rows on either side, and took their places near the front. The spacious hall was well filled with a strangely democratic crowd. High-class country relations of the Chiba family were sitting side by side with old vassals and retainers who, as youth or maiden, had served the family in olden days. Here and there were scattered a few old women, still so old-fashioned as to have blackened teeth; and among a group of clerks and office men were two charcoal burners wearing time-worn silk kimonos with the Chiba crest—a long-ago gift from their old master. It was a crowd representing almost every rank in life, but on every face was the same expression of deep and reverent feeling.

In the absolute silence of the crowded hall, boy priests moved about, lighting the tall candles and filling the boxes of the small incense stands with fragrant powder. They went from place to place, often out of sight of each other,

yet all their movements were in perfect rhythm, as if they were performing a solemn dance.

Suddenly a slight rustle passed over the audience as everyone bowed to the floor and remained motionless while two figures in priestly ceremonial robes entered slowly from either side of the altar and, meeting in the centre, kneeled before the Buddha.

They were the Abbot and the Young Priestess—no longer Yukiko, but now called by her purified worldly name, "Priestess Jo-setsu—pure snow."

The service began with the two voices, in turn, intoning the holy words, the pauses being filled with chanting, timed by the dull beat of the wooden fish drum and the soft, echoing "gon-n-n!" of the big bronze gong. The words, belonging to a bygone age, could not be understood; but music is the language of the soul, and the unknown words seemed only to increase the sense of mystery and awe with which the air was filled.

During the chanting a very interesting silent service was going on in the corridor outside the Altar Hall. Several boy-priests, slow-stepping in time to the music of the chant, were carrying white wooden trays of cooked rice and various vegetables, cakes, and fruits, and placing them on a long stand of step-like shelves.

It is a common Buddhist belief that people who live selfish lives, heedless of the needs of the poor, will have to do penance after death, in the "Hell of Hunger." There, Tantalus-like, they must endure the same pangs which,

while on Earth, they carelessly allowed others to suffer.

Many kind people pitifully remember these unhappy doomed, and it is a frequent custom at memorial services to set a generous table of steps for the hungry souls.

It is a kindly custom, and it carries a double blessing; for by the time the temple chanting has ended, the food vapour is supposed to have accomplished its mission of comfort to the starving souls. Then the material food is removed from the shelves and given to the living who are poor and in need.

The service in the Altar Hall was beautiful and appealing. No one noticed the tremor in the voice of Priestess Jo-setsu as she began to read the holy words, nor the frequent untimed clicks of the crystal beads of her rosary, as if the hands that held it trembled. It was only a matter of minutes before she was outwardly composed, but her face remained pallid, and her heart was hot and frightened. She had not known that the husband of Mr. Chiba's sister was Masao Ikeda until, as she entered the hall and turned slowly toward the Buddha, her startled eyes had seen him with the Chibas in one of the seats in front of the altar steps.

When the chanting came to an end, a little girl-priestess—a pupil of Priestess Jo-setsu—went up to the low table in front of the Buddha, and lifting one of the small incense stands to the level of her forehead, she presented it to the Abbot. He gravely lifted a bit of the powder and dropped it upon the glowing coal in the censer. A whiff of fragrant

smoke curled upward, carrying the Abbot's unspoken message of respect to the Chiba ancestors.

Then the little priestess carried the incense to Priestess Jo-setsu, and as she lifted her bowed head she was startled to see the face of her teacher deathly white; but her rigid training did not permit her to falter even for a moment. She only bowed her head lower than usual and passed on, hiding her troubled heart within the folds of her small priestly robe. As she stepped down to the guests seated on the matted floor she was joined by several little companions, each carrying a small incense stand like her own. From guest to guest they went, each of whom dropped a bit of powder in the censer, until the air was fragrant with heart messages curling their fragrant way upward to the heavenly region; for incense burning symbolizes deep regard or affection for the respected dead in whose memory this simple act is performed.

The ceremonies were closed by the Abbot slowly waving his nyoi, the long-haired priestly mace, signifying "By the will of Buddha!" while he called loudly the names of the honoured dead.

Throughout the service Kotoko had been greatly attracted by the slender, graceful figure kneeling before the Buddha, and by the gentle intoning of the soft voice. And when, as the Priestess rose to leave the hall, Kotoko saw her face, her heart went out in pitying wonder that a girl so beautiful and so young should have given up the beautiful world for the quiet life of a priestess.

At once she decided to try to meet Priestess Jo-setsu and thank her for taking part in the Chiba service, but as soon as the guests were on their feet, so many friends came crowding around her that Kotoko, being a stranger, had no opportunity to get near. Later, when she looked again, the priestess had disappeared.

Then came the dinner. It was held in the residential wing of the temple, and though of vegetables only, it was very elaborate and was served with formal ceremony. The Abbot and the Priestess had removed their gorgeous ceremonial robes and were now in brief attire—the Abbot in a plain black gown, with a black veiled cap, and Priestess Jo-setsu in her usual trailing dress, with shaven head and kesa of black and gold; for now their duties were over, and they were to meet friends as friends.

The Abbot, as guest of honour, sat in front of the tokonoma, and Priestess Jo-setsu near by, on his left. The small tables of the forty or more guests were arranged in the form of a long rectangle, with Mr. Chiba as host, at the far end. Kotoko sat at his right, her husband beside her. This brought Kotoko and the Priestess directly facing each other, although they were far apart.

During the dinner Priestess Jo-setsu talked to those near her, once in a while smiling pleasantly, but she never turned her eyes toward the end of the table where Kotoko and Masao sat side by side. At last, however, in an accidental lightning-like movement, both women chanced to look up at the same instant. Their eyes met. The Priest-

ess quickly turned aside to resume her conversation with her neighbour. There was a pale flush on her cheek, but she was talking pleasantly, and the next moment her face was as placid as before.

Kotoko, a little startled by the quick glance, turned toward her husband. He was looking across the open space at the Priestess. She saw a look of unbelieving amazement sweep over his face. He gave a start as if to rise; then he drew his finger tips slowly across his forehead and settled down upon his cushion. He picked up his chopsticks and began automatically to eat.

And Kotoko knew. A vivid picture flashed into her mind of that same sadly sweet face—only it was merry then—among a group of gay schoolgirls. It was in a photograph album at the home of Mrs. Kojima in New York. Then came swift memories of unconnected incidents mentioned by her husband since their marriage—incidents of his boyhood and youth. Could it be possible that this was Yukiko Toyama—a *priestess*?

With quick sympathy her heart reached out to this sweet woman who had renounced the world, and she yearned to show in some way—sympathy—comfort—— But, no; the barrier between herself and Priestess Jo-setsu was too great. It was doubly impenetrable—and forever!

The dinner dragged on. Reminiscences of the Chiba ancestors were told over—and over—and over. The hours seemed ages long to three hearts, all heavy with far-separated memories.

But finally the feasting came to an end, bows were exchanged, farewells said, and the guests had departed. Priestess Jo-setsu sent her little priestess-pupils to the School Department which was their home, and then walked slowly toward the great empty Hall of the Altar.

There, wrapped in absolute silence, alone in the midst of the spacious hall darkened by mingling shadows of standing banners, great vases of silver-leaved lotus and "heavenly canopies of gilded clouds," she kneeled before the calm-faced Buddha, and entering into zazen—the abstraction meditation—she slowly regained the serenity of mind which the afternoon had so sorely disturbed.

The sun was already hidden by the western hills, and twilight was gathering, when a slender figure in trailing robes of gray appeared at the top of the steps leading from the Hall of the Altar to the garden. There was a moment's pause—the stillness broken only by the soft rubbing of rosary beads mingling with the whispered prayer, "Namu, Amida, Butsu!"

Slowly she came down the steps, and slipping her feet into the wooden clogs on the stone pavement, she walked out into the garden.

At that moment a sickle moon glided silently from behind a shadowy cloud, and instantly the water mirror of the garden pond was quivering with another sickle moon. After a moment of silence a gentle voice softly repeated the words of the sacred sutra:

"Human life is but a reflected shadow, like the moon

mirrored in water. Only an apparition without lasting substance—a fleeting dream of gladness, love, sorrow, regret, and pain—then calmness and peace.”

The evening breeze swayed the branches above, and softly through the air a shower of golden icho leaves came fluttering down and settled among the brown pine needles, like dead memories of the years that were gone.

THE END

Ans. M. No. Nat. Miss Anderson

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